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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. 1.

LEIPZIG: BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ.

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THE LEGACY OF CAIN

BY

WILKIE COLLINS,

AUTHOR OF "THE WOMAN IN WHITE," ETC.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LEIPZIG

BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1888.

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BIBLIOTHECA
REGIA
MONACENSIS

TO

MRS. HENRY POWELL BARTLEY.

Permit me to add your name to my name, in publishing this novel. The pen which has written my books cannot be more agreeably employed than in acknowledging what I owe to the pen which has skilfully and patiently helped me, by copying my manuscripts for the printer.

WILKIE COLLINS.

Wimpole Street, London.
6th December 1888.

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THE LEGACY OF CAIN.

First Period: 1858—1859.

EVENTS IN THE PRISON, RELATED BY THE GOVERNOR.

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THE LEGACY OF CAIN.

CHAPTER I.

THE GOVERNOR EXPLAINS.

At the request of a person who has claims on me that I must not disown, I consent to look back through a long interval of years, and to describe events which took place within the walls of an English prison, during the earlier period of my appointment as Governor.

Viewing my task by the light which later experience casts on it, I think I shall act wisely by exercising some control over the freedom of my pen.

I propose to pass over in silence the name of the town in which is situated the prison once confided to my care. I shall observe a similar discretion in alluding to individuals—some dead, some living, at the present time.

Being obliged to write of a woman who deservedly suffered the extreme penalty of the law, I think she will be sufficiently identified if I call her The Prisoner. Of the four persons present on the evening before her execution, three may be distinguished one from the other by allusion to their vocations in life. I here introduce them as The Chaplain, The Minister, and The Doctor. The fourth was a young woman. *She* has no claim on my consideration; and, when she is mentioned, her name may appear. If these reserves excite suspicion, I declare beforehand that they influence in no way the sense of responsibility which commands an honest man to speak the truth.

CHAPTER II.

THE MURDERESS ASKS QUESTIONS.

THE first of the events which I must now relate was the conviction of The Prisoner for the murder of her husband.

They had lived together in matrimony for little more than two years. The husband, a gentleman by birth and education, had mortally offended his relations by marrying a woman in an inferior rank

of life. He was fast declining into a state of poverty, through his own reckless extravagance, at the time when he met with his death at his wife's hand.

Without attempting to excuse him, he deserved, to my mind, some tribute of regret. It is not to be denied that he was profligate in his habits and violent in his temper. But it is equally true that he was affectionate in the domestic circle, and, when moved by wisely-applied remonstrance, sincerely penitent for sins committed under temptation that overpowered him. If his wife had killed him in a fit of jealous rage—under provocation, be it remembered, which the witnesses proved—she might have been convicted of manslaughter, and might have received a light sentence. But the evidence so undeniably revealed deliberate and merciless premeditation, that the only defence attempted by her counsel was madness, and the only alternative left to a righteous jury was a verdict which condemned the woman to death. Those mischievous members of the community, whose topsy-turvy sympathies feel for the living criminal and forget the dead victim, attempted to save her by means of high-flown petitions and contemptible correspondence in the newspapers. But the Judge held firm; and the Home

Secretary held firm. They were entirely right; and the public were scandalously wrong.

Our Chaplain endeavoured to offer the consolations of religion to the condemned wretch. She refused to accept his ministrations in language which filled him with grief and horror.

On the evening before the execution, the reverend gentleman laid on my table his own written report of a conversation which had passed between the Prisoner and himself.

"I see some hope, sir," he said, "of inclining the heart of this woman to religious belief, before it is too late. Will you read my report, and say if you agree with me?"

I read it, of course. It was called "A Memorandum," and was thus written:

"At his last interview with the Prisoner, the Chaplain asked her if she had ever entered a place of public worship. She replied that she had occasionally attended the services at a Congregational Church in this town; attracted by the reputation of the Minister as a preacher. 'He entirely failed to make a Christian of me,' she said; 'but I was struck by his eloquence. Besides, he interested me personally—he was a fine man.'

"In the dreadful situation in which the woman

was placed, such language as this shocked the Chaplain; he appealed in vain to the Prisoner's sense of propriety. 'You don't understand women,' she answered. 'The greatest saint of my sex that ever lived likes to look at a preacher as well as to hear him. If he is an agreeable man, he has all the greater effect on her. This preacher's voice told me he was kind-hearted; and I had only to look at his beautiful eyes to see that he was trustworthy and true.'

"It was useless to repeat a protest which had already failed. Recklessly and flippantly as she had described it, an impression had been produced on her. It occurred to the Chaplain that he might at least make the attempt to turn this result to her own religious advantage. He asked whether she would receive the Minister, if the reverend gentleman came to the prison. 'That will depend,' she said, 'on whether you answer some questions which I want to put to you first.' The Chaplain consented; provided always that he could reply with propriety to what she asked of him. Her first question only related to himself.

"She said: 'The women who watch me tell me that you are a widower, and have a family of children. Is that true?'

"The Chaplain answered that it was quite true.

"She alluded next to a report, current in the town, that the Minister had resigned the pastorate. Being personally acquainted with him, the Chaplain was able to inform her that his resignation had not yet been accepted. On hearing this, she seemed to gather confidence. Her next inquiries succeeded each other rapidly, as follows:

"'Is my handsome preacher married?'

"'Yes.'

"'Has he got any children?'

"'He has never had any children.'

"'How long has he been married?'

"'As well as I know, about seven or eight years.'

"'What sort of woman is his wife?'

"'A lady universally respected.'

"'I don't care whether she is respected or not. Is she kind?'

"'Certainly!'

"'Is her husband well off?'

"'He has a sufficient income.'

"After that reply, the Prisoner's curiosity appeared to be satisfied. She said, 'Bring your friend the preacher to me, if you like'—and there it ended.

"What her object could have been in putting these questions, it seems to be impossible to guess. Having accurately reported all that took place, the Chaplain declares, with heart-felt regret, that he can exert no religious influence over this obdurate woman. He leaves it to the Governor to decide whether the Minister of the Congregational Church may not succeed, where the Chaplain of the Gaol has failed. Herein is the one last hope of saving the soul of the Prisoner, now under sentence of death."

In those serious words the Memorandum ended.

Although not personally acquainted with the Minister, I had heard of him, on all sides, as an excellent man. In the emergency that confronted us he had, as it seemed to me, his own sacred right to enter the prison; assuming that he was willing to accept, what I myself felt to be, a very serious responsibility. The first necessity was to discover whether we might hope to obtain his services. With my full approval the Chaplain left me, to state the circumstances to his reverend colleague.

CHAPTER III.

THE CHILD APPEARS.

DURING my friend's absence, my attention was claimed by a sad incident—not unforeseen.

It is, I suppose, generally known that near relatives are admitted to take their leave of criminals condemned to death. In the case of the Prisoner now waiting for execution, no person applied to the authorities for permission to see her. I myself inquired if she had any relations living, and if she would like to see them. She answered: "None that I care to see, or that care to see me—except the nearest relation of all."

In those last words the miserable creature alluded to her only child, a little girl (an infant, I should say), who had passed her first year's birthday by a few months. The farewell interview was to take place on the mother's last evening on earth; and the child was now brought into my rooms, in charge of her nurse.

I had seldom seen a brighter or prettier little girl. She was just able to walk alone, and to enjoy the first delight of moving from one place to an-

other. Quite of her own accord she came to me, attracted I dare say by the glitter of my watch-chain. Helping her to climb on my knee, I showed the wonders of the watch, and held it to her ear. At that past time, death had taken my good wife from me; my two boys were away at Harrow School; my domestic life was the life of a lonely man. Whether I was reminded of the bygone days when my sons were infants on my knee, listening to the ticking of my watch—or whether the friendless position of the poor little creature, who had lost one parent and was soon to lose the other by a violent death, moved in me depths of pity not easily reached in my later experience—I am not able to say. This only I know: my heart ached for the child while she was laughing and listening; and something fell from me on the watch which I don't deny might have been a tear. A few of the toys, mostly broken now, which my two children used to play with are still in my possession; kept, like my poor wife's favourite jewels, for old remembrance' sake. These I took from their repository when the attraction of my watch showed signs of failing. The child pounced on them with her chubby hands, and screamed with pleasure. And the hangman was waiting for her mother—and, more horrid still, the mother deserved it!

My duty required me to let the Prisoner know that her little daughter had arrived. Did that heart of iron melt at last? It might have been so, or it might not; the message sent back kept her secret. All that it said to me was: "Let the child wait till I send for her."

The Minister had consented to help us. On his arrival at the prison, I received him privately in my study.

I had only to look at his face—pitiably pale and agitated—to see that he was a sensitive man, not always able to control his nerves on occasions which tried his moral courage. A kind, I might almost say a noble face, and a voice unaffectedly persuasive, at once prepossessed me in his favour. The few words of welcome that I spoke were intended to compose him. They failed to produce the impression on which I had counted.

"My experience," he said, "has included many melancholy duties, and has tried my composure in many terrible scenes; but I have never yet found myself in the presence of an unrepentant criminal, sentenced to death—and that criminal a woman and a mother. I own, sir, that I am shaken by the prospect before me."

I suggested that he should wait awhile, in the

hope that time and quiet might help him. He thanked me, and refused.

"If I have any knowledge of myself," he said, "terrors of anticipation lose their hold when I am face to face with a serious call on me. The longer I remain here, the less worthy I shall appear of the trust that has been placed in me—the trust which, please God, I mean to deserve."

My own observation of human nature told me that this was wisely said. I led the way at once to the cell.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MINISTER SAYS YES.

THE Prisoner was seated on her bed, quietly talking with the woman appointed to watch her. When she rose to receive us, I saw the Minister start. The face that confronted him would, in my opinion, have taken any man by surprise, if he had first happened to see it within the walls of a prison.

Visitors to the picture-galleries of Italy, growing weary of Holy Families in endless succession, observe that the idea of the Madonna, among the rank and file of Italian Painters, is limited to one

changeless and familiar type. I can hardly hope to be believed when I say that the personal appearance of the murderess recalled that type. She presented the delicate light hair, the quiet eyes, the finely-shaped lower features, and the correctly oval form of face, repeated in hundreds on hundreds of the conventional works of Art to which I have ventured to allude. To those who doubt me, I can only declare that what I have here written is undisguised and absolute truth. Let me add that daily observation of all classes of criminals, extending over many years, has considerably diminished my faith in physiognomy as a safe guide to the discovery of character. Nervous trepidation looks like guilt. Guilt, firmly sustained by insensibility, looks like innocence. One of the vilest wretches ever placed under my charge, won the sympathies (while he was waiting for his trial) of every person who saw him, including even the persons employed in the prison. Only the other day, ladies and gentlemen coming to visit me, passed a body of men at work on the road. Judges of physiognomy among them were horrified at the criminal atrocity betrayed in every face that they noticed. They condoled with me on the near neighbourhood of so many convicts to my official place of residence. I

looked out of the window, and saw a group of honest labourers (whose only crime was poverty) employed by the parish!

Having instructed the female warder to leave the room—but to take care that she waited within call—I looked again at the Minister.

Confronted by the serious responsibility that he had undertaken, he justified what he had said to me. Still pale, still distressed, he was now nevertheless master of himself. I turned to the door to leave him alone with the Prisoner. She called me back.

"Before this gentleman tries to convert me," she said, "I want you to wait here and be a witness."

Finding that we were both willing to comply with this request, she addressed herself directly to the Minister. "Suppose I promise to listen to your exhortations," she began, "what do you promise to do for me in return?"

The voice in which she spoke to him was steady and clear; a marked contrast to the tremulous earnestness with which he answered her.

"I promise to urge you to repentance and the confession of your crime. I promise to implore the divine blessing on me in the effort to save your poor guilty soul."

She looked at him, and listened to him, as if he was speaking to her in an unknown tongue, and went on with what she had to say as quietly as ever.

"When I am hanged to-morrow, suppose I die without confessing, without repenting—are you one of those who believe I shall be doomed to eternal punishment in another life?"

"I believe in the mercy of God."

"Answer my question, if you please. Is an impenitent sinner eternally punished? Do you believe that?"

"My Bible leaves me no other alternative."

She paused for awhile, evidently considering with special attention what she was about to say next.

"As a religious man," she resumed, "would you be willing to make some sacrifice, rather than let a fellow-creature go—after a disgraceful death—to everlasting torment?"

"I know of no sacrifice in my power," he said fervently, "to which I would not rather submit, than let you die in the present dreadful state of your mind."

The Prisoner turned to me. "Is the person who watches me waiting outside?"

"Yes."

"Will you be so kind as to call her in? I have a message for her."

It was plain that she had been leading the way to the delivery of that message, whatever it might be, in all that she had said up to the present time. So far my poor powers of penetration helped me, and no farther.

The warder appeared, and received her message. "Tell the woman who has come here with my little girl that I want to see the child."

Taken completely by surprise, I signed to the attendant to wait for further instructions.

In a moment more, I had sufficiently recovered myself to see the impropriety of permitting any obstacle to interpose between the Minister and his errand of mercy. I gently reminded the Prisoner that she would have a later opportunity of seeing her child. "Your first duty," I told her, "is to hear and to take to heart what the clergyman has to say to you."

For the second time I attempted to leave the cell. For the second time this impenetrable woman called me back.

"Take the parson away with you," she said. "I refuse to listen to him."

The patient Minister yielded, and appealed to

me to follow his example. I reluctantly sanctioned the delivery of the message.

After a brief interval the child was brought to us, tired and sleepy. For a while the nurse roused her by setting her on her feet. She happened to notice the Minister first. Her bright eyes rested on him, gravely wondering. He kissed her, and, after a momentary hesitation, gave her to her mother. Tho horror of the situation overpowered him: he turned his face away from us. I understood what he felt; he almost overthrew my own self-command.

The Prisoner spoke to the nurse in no friendly tone: "You can go."

The nurse turned to me, ostentatiously ignoring the words that had been addressed to her. "Am I to go, sir, or to stay?" I suggested that she should return to the waiting-room. She returned at once, in silence. The Prisoner looked after her as she went out, with such an expression of hatred in her eyes that the Minister noticed it.

"What has that person done to offend you?" he asked.

"She is the last person in the whole world whom I should have chosen to take care of my child, if the power of choosing had been mine. But I have been in prison, without a living creature to represent

me or to take my part. No more of that; my troubles will be over in a few hours more. I want you to look at my little girl, whose troubles are all to come. Do you call her pretty? Do you feel interested in her?"

The sorrow and pity in his face answered for him.

Quietly sleeping, the poor baby rested on her mother's bosom. Was the heart of the murderess softened by the divine influence of maternal love? The hands that held the child trembled a little. For the first time, it seemed to cost her an effort to compose herself, before she could speak to the Minister again.

"When I die to-morrow," she said, "I leave my child helpless and friendless—disgraced by her mother's shameful death. The workhouse may take her—or a charitable asylum may take her." She paused; a first tinge of colour rose on her pale face; she broke into an outburst of rage. "Think of *my* daughter being brought up by charity! She may suffer poverty, she may be treated with contempt, she may be employed by brutal people in menial work. I can't endure it; it maddens me. If she is not saved from that wretched fate, I shall die despairing, I shall die cursing——"

The Minister sternly stopped her before she could

say the next word. To my astonishment she appeared to be humbled, to be even ashamed: she asked his pardon: "Forgive me; I won't forget myself again. They tell me you have no children of your own. Is that a sorrow to you and your wife?"

Her altered tone touched him. He answered sadly and kindly: "It is the one sorrow of our lives."

The purpose which she had been keeping in view from the moment when the Minister entered her cell was no mystery now. Ought I to have interfered? Let me confess a weakness, unworthy perhaps of my office. I was so sorry for the child—I hesitated.

My silence encouraged the mother. She advanced to the Minister with the sleeping infant in her arms.

"I dare say you have sometimes thought of adopting a child?" she said. "Perhaps you can guess now what I had in my mind, when I asked if you would consent to a sacrifice? Will you take this wretched innocent little creature home with you?" She lost her self-possession once more. "A motherless creature to-morrow," she burst out. "Think of that."

God knows how I still shrunk from it! But there was no alternative now; I was bound to remember my duty to the excellent man, whose critical position at that moment was, in some degree at least, due to

my hesitation in asserting my authority. Could I allow the Prisoner to presume on his compassionate nature, and to hurry him into a decision which, in his calmer moments, he might find reason to regret? I spoke to *him*. Does the man live who—having to say what I had to say—could have spoken to the doomed mother?

"I am sorry I have allowed this to go on," I said. "In justice to yourself, sir, don't answer!"

She turned on me with a look of fury.

"He shall answer!" she cried.

I saw, or thought I saw, signs of yielding in his face. "Take time," I persisted—"take time to consider before you decide."

She stepped up to me.

"Take time?" she repeated. "Are you inhuman enough to talk of time, in my presence?"

She laid the sleeping child on her bed, and fell on her knees before the Minister: "I promise to hear your exhortations—I promise to do all a woman can to believe and repent. Oh, I know myself! My heart, once hardened, is a heart that no human creature can touch. The one way to my better nature—if I have a better nature—is through that poor babe. Save her from the workhouse! Don't let them make a pauper of her!" She sank prostrate at his feet,

and beat her hands in frenzy on the floor. "You want to save my guilty soul," she reminded him furiously. "There's but one way of doing it. Save my child!"

He raised her. Her fierce tearless eyes questioned his face in a mute expectation dreadful to see. Suddenly, a foretaste of death—the death that was so near now!—struck her with a shivering fit: her head dropped on the Minister's shoulder. Other men might have shrunk from the contact of it. That true Christian let it rest.

Under the maddening sting of suspense, her sinking energies rallied for an instant. In a whisper, she was just able to put the supreme question to him.

"Yes? or No?"

He answered: "Yes."

A faint breath of relief, just audible in the silence, told me that she had heard him. It was her last effort. He laid her, insensible, on the bed, by the side of her sleeping child. "Look at them," was all he said to me; "how could I refuse?"

CHAPTER V.

MISS CHANCE ASSERTS HERSELF.

THE services of our medical officer were required, in order to hasten the recovery of the Prisoner's senses.

When the Doctor and I left the cell together, she was composed, and ready (in the performance of her promise) to listen to the exhortations of the Minister. The sleeping child was left undisturbed, by the mother's desire. If the Minister felt tempted to regret what he had done, *there* was the artless influence which would check him! As we stepped into the corridor, I gave the female warder her instructions to remain on the watch, and to return to her post when she saw the Minister come out.

In the meantime, my companion had walked on a little way.

Possessed of ability and experience within the limits of his profession, he was in other respects a man with a crotchety mind; bold to the verge of recklessness in the expression of his opinion; and possessed of a command of language that carried

everything before it. Let me add that he was just and merciful in his intercourse with others, and I shall have summed him up fairly enough. When I joined him, he seemed to be absorbed in reflection.

"Thinking of the Prisoner?" I said.

"Thinking of what is going on, at this moment, in the condemned cell," he answered, "and wondering if any good will come of it."

I was not without hope of a good result, and I said so.

The Doctor disagreed with me. "I don't believe in that woman's penitence," he remarked; "and I look upon the parson as a poor weak creature. What is to become of the child?"

There was no reason for concealing from one of my colleagues the benevolent decision, on the part of the good Minister, of which I had been a witness. The Doctor listened to me with the first appearance of downright astonishment that I had ever observed in his face. When I had done, he made an extraordinary reply:

"Governor, I retract what I said of the parson just now. He is one of the boldest men that ever stepped into a pulpit."

Was the Doctor in earnest? Strongly in earnest; there could be no doubt of it. Before I could ask

him what he meant, he was called away to a patient on to the other side of the prison. When we parted at the door of my room, I made it a request that my medical friend would return to me and explain what he had just said.

"Considering that you are the governor of a prison," he replied, "you are a singularly rash man. If I come back, how do you know I shall not bore you?"

"My rashness runs the risk of that," I rejoined.

"Tell me something, before I allow you to run your risk," he said. "Are you one of those people who think that the tempers of children are formed by the accidental influences which happen to be about them? Or do you agree with me that the tempers of children are inherited from their parents?"

The Doctor (as I concluded) was still strongly impressed by the Minister's resolution to adopt a child, whose wicked mother had committed the most atrocious of all crimes. Was some serious foreboding, suggested by that circumstance, in secret possession of his mind? My curiosity to hear him was now increased tenfold. I replied without hesitation:

"I agree with you."

He looked at me with his sense of humour

twinkling in his eyes. "Do you know I rather expected that answer?" he said, slyly. "All right. I'll come back."

Left by myself, I took up the day's newspaper.

My attention wandered; my thoughts were in the cell with the Minister and the Prisoner. How would it end? Sometimes, I was inclined to doubt with the Doctor. Sometimes, I took refuge in my own more hopeful view. These idle reflections were agreeably interrupted by the appearance of my friend, the Chaplain.

"You are always welcome," I said; "and doubly welcome just now. I am feeling a little worried and anxious."

"And you are naturally," the Chaplain added, "not at all disposed to receive a stranger?"

"Is the stranger a friend of yours?" I asked.

"Oh, no! Having occasion, just now, to go into the waiting-room, I found a young woman there, who asked me if she could see you. She thinks you have forgotten her, and she is tired of waiting. I merely undertook, of course, to mention what she had said to me."

The nurse having been in this way recalled to my memory, I felt some little interest in seeing her, after what had passed in the cell. In plainer words,

I was desirous of judging for myself whether she deserved the hostile feeling which the Prisoner had shown towards her. I thanked the Chaplain before he left me, and gave the servant the necessary instructions. When she entered the room, I looked at the woman attentively for the first time.

Youth and a fine complexion, a well-made figure and a natural grace of movement—these were her personal attractions, so far as I could see. Her defects were, to my mind, equally noticeable. Under a heavy forehead, her piercing eyes looked out at persons and things, with an expression which was not to my taste. Her large mouth—another defect, in my opinion—would have been recommended to mercy, in the estimation of many men, by her magnificent teeth; white, well shaped, cruelly regular. Believers in physiognomy might perhaps have seen the betrayal of an obstinate nature in the lengthy firmness of her chin. While I am trying to describe her, let me not forget her dress. A woman's dress is the mirror in which we may see the reflection of a woman's nature. Bearing in mind the melancholy and impressive circumstances under which she had brought the child to the prison—the gaiety of colour in her gown and her bonnet implied either a total want of feeling, or a total want of tact. As to her

position in life, let me confess that I felt, after a closer examination, at a loss to determine it. She was certainly not a lady. The Prisoner had spoken of her as if she was a domestic servant who had forfeited her right to consideration and respect. And she had entered the prison, as a nurse might have entered it, in charge of a child. I did what we all do when we are not clever enough to find the answer to a riddle—I gave it up.

"What can I do for you?" I asked.

"Perhaps you can tell me," she answered, "how much longer I am to be kept waiting in this prison."

"The decision," I reminded her, "doesn't depend on me."

"Then who *does* it depend on?"

The Minister had undoubtedly acquired the sole right of deciding. It was for him to say whether this woman should, or should not, remain in attendance on the child whom he had adopted. In the meanwhile, the feeling of distrust which was gaining on my mind warned me to remember the value of reserve in holding intercourse with a stranger.

She seemed to be irritated by my silence. "If the decision doesn't rest with you," she asked, "why did you tell me to stay in the waiting-room?"

"You brought the little girl into the prison," I said; "was it not natural to suppose that your mistress might want you——?"

"Stop, sir!"

I had evidently given offence; I stopped directly.

"No person on the face of the earth," she declared loftily, "has ever had the right to call herself my mistress. Of my own free will, sir, I took charge of the child."

"Because you are fond of her?" I suggested.

"I hate her."

It was unwise on my part—I protested. "Hate a baby, little more than a year old!" I said.

"*Her* baby!"

She said it with the air of a woman who had produced an unanswerable reason. "I am accountable to nobody," she went on. "If I consented to trouble myself with the child, it was in remembrance of my friendship—notice, if you please, that I say friendship—with the unhappy father."

Putting together what I had just heard, and what I had seen in the cell, I drew the right conclusion at last. The woman, whose position in life had been thus far an impenetrable mystery to me, now stood revealed as one, among other objects of the

Prisoner's jealousy, during her disastrous married life. A serious doubt occurred to me as to the authority under which the husband's mistress might be acting, after the husband's death. I instantly put it to the test.

"Do I understand you to assert any claim to the child?" I asked.

"Claim?" she repeated. "I know no more of the child than you do. I heard for the first time that such a creature was in existence, when her murdered father sent for me in his dying moments. At his entreaty I promised to take care of her, while her vile mother was out of the house and in the hands of the law. My promise has been performed. If I am expected (having brought her to the prison) to take her away again, understand this: I am under no obligation (even if I could afford it) to burden myself with that child; I shall hand her over to the workhouse authorities."

I forgot myself once more—I lost my temper.

"Leave the room!" I said. "Your unworthy hands will not touch the poor baby again. She is provided for."

"I don't believe you!" the wretch burst out. "Who has taken the child?"

A quiet voice answered: "*I* have taken her."

We both looked round and saw the Minister standing in the open doorway, with the child in his arms. The ordeal that he had gone through in the condemned cell was visible in his face; he looked miserably haggard and broken. I was eager to know if his merciful interest in the Prisoner had purified her guilty soul—but at the same time I was afraid, after what he had but too plainly suffered, to ask him to enter into details.

"Only one word," I said. "Are your anxieties at rest?"

"God's mercy has helped me," he answered. "I have not spoken in vain. She believes; she repents; she has confessed the crime."

After handing the written and signed confession to me, he approached the venomous creature, still lingering in the room to hear what passed between us. Before I could stop him, he spoke to her, under a natural impression that he was addressing the Prisoner's servant.

"I am afraid you will be disappointed," he said, "when I tell you that your services will no longer be required. I have reasons for placing the child under the care of a nurse of my own choosing."

She listened with an evil smile.

"I know who furnished you with your reasons,"

she answered. "Apologies are quite needless, so far as I am concerned. If you had proposed to me to look after the new member of your family there, I should have felt it my duty to myself to have refused. I am not a nurse—I am an independent single lady. I see by your dress that you are a clergyman; allow me to present myself as a mark of respect to your cloth. I am Miss Elizabeth Chance. May I ask the favour of your name?"

Too weary and too preoccupied to notice the insolence of her manner, the Minister mentioned his name. "I am anxious," he said, "to know if the child has been baptized. Perhaps you can enlighten me?"

Still insolent, Miss Elizabeth Chance shook her head carelessly. "I never heard—and, to tell you the truth, I never cared to hear—whether she was christened or not. Call her by what name you like, I can tell you this—you will find your adopted daughter a heavy handful."

The Minister turned to me. "What does she mean?"

"I will try to tell you," Miss Chance interposed. "Being a clergyman, you know who Deborah was? Very well. I am Deborah now; and *I* prophesy." She pointed to the child. "Remember what I say,

reverend sir! You will find the tigress-cub take after its mother."

With those parting words, she favoured us with a low curtsey, and left the room.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DOCTOR DOUBTS.

THE Minister looked at me in an absent manner; his attention seemed to have been wandering. "What was it Miss Chance said?" he asked.

Before I could speak, a friend's voice at the door interrupted us. The Doctor, returning to me as he had promised, answered the Minister's question in these words:

"I must have passed the person you mention, sir, as I was coming in here; and I heard her say: 'You will find the tigress-cub take after her mother.' If she had known how to put her meaning into good English, Miss Chance—that is the name you mentioned, I think—might have told you that the vices of the parents are inherited by the children. And the one particular parent she had in her mind," the Doctor continued, gently patting the child's cheek, "was no doubt the mother of this unfortunate little

creature—who may, or may not, live to show you that she comes of a bad stock and inherits a wicked nature."

I was on the point of protesting against my friend's interpretation, when the Minister stopped me.

"Let me thank you, sir, for your explanation," he said to the Doctor. "As soon as my mind is free, I will reflect on what you have said. Forgive me, Mr. Governor," he went on, "if I leave you, now that I have placed the Prisoner's confession in your hands. It has been an effort to me to say the little I have said, since I first entered this room. I can think of nothing but that unhappy criminal, and the death that she must die to-morrow."

"Does she wish you to be present?" I asked.

"She positively forbids it. 'After what you have done for me,' she said, 'the least I can do in return is to prevent your being needlessly distressed.' She took leave of me; she kissed the little girl for the last time—oh, don't ask me to tell you about it! I shall break down if I try. Come, my darling!" He kissed the child tenderly, and took her away with him.

"That man is a strange compound of strength and weakness," the Doctor remarked. "Did you notice his face, just now? Nine men out of ten, suffering

as he suffered, would have failed to control themselves. Such resolution as his *may* conquer the difficulties that are in store for him, yet."

It was a trial of my temper to hear my clever colleague justifying, in this way, the ignorant prediction of an insolent woman.

"There are exceptions to all rules," I insisted. "And why are the virtues of the parents not just as likely to descend to the children as the vices? There was a fund of good, I can tell you, in that poor baby's father—though I don't deny that he was a profligate man. And even the horrible mother—as you heard just now—has virtue enough left in her to feel grateful to the man who has taken care of her child. These are facts; you can't dispute them."

The Doctor took out his pipe. "Do you mind my smoking?" he asked. "Tobacco helps me to arrange my ideas."

I gave him the means of arranging his ideas; that is to say, I gave him the match-box. He blew some preliminary clouds of smoke—and then he answered me:

"For twenty years past, my friend, I have been studying the question of hereditary transmission of qualities; and I have found vices and diseases de-

scending more frequently to children than virtues and health. I don't stop to ask why: there is no end to that sort of curiosity. What I have observed is what I tell you; no more and no less. You will say this is a horribly discouraging result of experience, for it tends to show that children come into the world at a disadvantage on the day of their birth. Of course they do. Children are born deformed; children are born deaf, dumb, or blind; children are born with the seeds in them of deadly diseases. Who can account for the cruelties of creation? Why are we endowed with life—only to end in death? And does it ever strike you, when you are cutting your mutton at dinner, and your cat is catching its mouse, and your spider is suffocating its fly, that we are all, big and little together, born to one certain inheritance—the privilege of eating each other."

"Very sad," I admitted. "But it will all be set right in another world."

"Are you sure of that?" the Doctor asked.

"Quite sure, thank God! And it would be better for you if you felt about it as I do."

"We won't dispute, my dear Governor. I don't scoff at comforting hopes; I don't deny the existence of occasional compensations. But I do see, nevertheless, that Evil has got the upper hand among us,

on this curious little planet. Judging by my observation and experience, that ill-fated baby's chance of inheriting the virtues of her parents is not to be compared with her chances of inheriting their vices; especially if she happens to take after her mother. *There,* the virtue is not conspicuous, and the vice is one enormous fact. When I think of the growth of that poisonous hereditary taint, which may come with time—when I think of passions let loose and temptations lying in ambush—I see the smooth surface of the Minister's domestic life with dangers lurking under it which make me shake in my shoes. God! what a life I should lead, if I happened to be in his place, some years hence. Suppose I said or did something (in the just exercise of my parental authority) which offended my adopted daughter. What figure would rise from the dead in my memory, when the girl bounced out of the room in a rage? The image of her mother would be the image I should see. I should remember what her mother did when *she* was provoked; I should lock my bedroom-door, in my own house, at night. I should come down to breakfast with suspicions of my cup of tea, if I discovered that my adopted daughter had poured it out. Oh, yes; it's quite true that I might be doing the girl a cruel injustice all the time; but

how am I to be sure of that? I am only sure that her mother was hanged for one of the most merciless murders committed in our time. Pass the match-box. My pipe's out, and my confession of faith has come to an end."

It was useless to dispute with a man who possessed his command of language. At the same time, there was a bright side to the poor Minister's prospects which the Doctor had failed to see. It was barely possible that I might succeed in putting my positive friend in the wrong. I tried the experiment at any rate.

"You seem to have forgotten," I reminded him, "that the child will have every advantage that education can offer to her, and will be accustomed from her earliest years to restraining and purifying influences, in a clergyman's household."

Now that he was enjoying the fumes of tobacco, the Doctor was as placid and sweet-tempered as a man could be.

"Quite true," he said.

"Do you doubt the influence of religion?" I asked, sternly.

He answered sweetly: "Not at all."

"Or the influence of kindness?"

"Oh, dear, no!"

"Or the force of example?"

"I wouldn't deny it for the world."

I had not expected this extraordinary docility. The Doctor had got the upper hand of me again—a state of things that I might have found it hard to endure, but for a call of duty which put an end to our sitting. One of the female warders appeared with a message from the condemned cell. The Prisoner wished to see the Governor and the Medical Officer.

"Is she ill?" the Doctor inquired.

"No, sir."

"Hysterical? or agitated, perhaps?"

"As easy and composed, sir, as a person can be."

We set forth together for the condemned cell.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MURDERESS CONSULTS THE AUTHORITIES.

THERE was a considerate side to my friend's character, which showed itself when the warder had left us.

He was especially anxious to be careful of what he said to a woman in the Prisoner's terrible situa-

tion; especially in the event of her having been really subjected to the influence of religious belief. On the Minister's own authority, I declared that there was every reason to adopt this conclusion; and in support of what I had said I showed him the confession. It only contained a few lines, acknowledging that she had committed the murder, and that she deserved her sentence. "From the planning of the crime to the commission of the crime, I was in my right senses throughout. I knew what I was doing." With that remarkable disavowal of the defence set up by her advocate, the confession ended.

My colleague read the paper, and handed it back to me without making any remark. I asked if he suspected the Prisoner of feigning conversion to please the Minister.

"She shall not discover it," he answered gravely, "if I do."

It would not be true to say that the Doctor's obstinacy had shaken my belief in the good result of the Minister's interference. I may, however, acknowledge that I felt some misgivings, which were not dispelled when I found myself in the presence of the Prisoner.

I had expected to see her employed in reading

the Bible. The good book was closed, and was not even placed within her reach. The occupation to which she was devoting herself astonished and repelled me.

Some carelessness on the part of the attendant, had left on the table the writing materials that had been needed for her confession. She was using them now—when death on the scaffold was literally within a few hours of her—to sketch a portrait of the female warder, who was on the watch! The Doctor and I looked at each other; and now the sincerity of her repentance was something that I began to question, too.

She laid down the pen, and proceeded quietly to explain herself.

"Even the little time that is left to me proves to be a weary time to get through," she said. "I am making a last use of the talent for drawing and catching a likeness, which has been one of my gifts since I was a girl. You look as if you didn't approve of such employment as this for a woman who is going to be hanged. Well, sir, I have no doubt you are right." She paused, and tore up the portrait. "If I have misbehaved myself," she resumed, "I make amends. To find you in an indulgent frame of mind is of importance to me just now. I

have a favour to ask of you. May the warder leave the cell for a few minutes?"

Giving the woman permission to withdraw for awhile, I waited with some anxiety to hear what the Prisoner wanted of me.

"I have something to say to you," she proceeded, "on the subject of executions. The face of a person who is going to be hanged is hidden, as I have been told, by a white cap drawn over it. Is that true?"

How another man might have felt, in my place, I cannot, of course, say. To my mind, such a question—on *her* lips—was too shocking to be answered in words. I bowed.

"And the body is buried," she went on, "in the prison?"

I could remain silent no longer. "Is there no human feeling left in you?" I burst out. "What do these horrid questions mean?"

"Don't be angry with me, sir; you shall hear directly. I want to know first if I am to be buried in the prison?"

I replied as before, by a bow.

"Now," she said, "I may tell you what I mean. In the autumn of last year I was taken to see some waxworks. Portraits of criminals were among them.

There was one portrait——" She hesitated; her infernal self-possession failed her at last. The colour left her face; she was no longer able to look at me firmly. "There was one portrait," she resumed, "that had been taken after the execution. The face was so hideous; it was swollen to such a size in its frightful deformity—oh, sir, don't let me be seen in that state, even by the strangers who bury me! Use your influence—forbid them to take the cap off my face when I am dead—order them to bury me in it, and I swear to you I'll meet death to-morrow as coolly as the boldest man that ever mounted the scaffold!" Before I could stop her, she seized me by the hand, and wrung it with a furious power that left the mark of her grasp on me, in a bruise, for days afterwards. "Will you do it?" she cried. "You're an honourable man; you will keep your word. Give me your promise!"

I gave her my promise.

The relief to her tortured spirit expressed itself horribly in a burst of frantic laughter. "I can't help it," she gasped; "I'm so happy."

My enemies said of me, when I got my appointment, that I was too excitable a man to be governor of a prison. Perhaps they were not altogether wrong. Anyhow, the quick-witted Doctor saw some change

in me, which I was not aware of myself. He took my arm, and led me out of the cell. "Leave her to me," he whispered. "The fine edge of my nerves was worn off long ago in the hospital."

When we met again, I asked what had passed between the Prisoner and himself.

"I gave her time to recover," he told me; "and, except that she looked a little paler than usual, there was no trace left of the frenzy that you remember. 'I ought to apologise for troubling you,' she said; 'but it is perhaps natural that I should think, now and then, of what is to happen to me to-morrow morning. As a medical man, you will be able to enlighten me. Is death by hanging a painful death?' She had put it so politely that I felt bound to answer her. 'If the neck happens to be broken,' I said, 'hanging is a sudden death; fright and pain (if there is any pain) are both over in an instant. As to the other form of death which is also possible (I mean death by suffocation), I must own as an honest man that I know no more about it than you do.' After considering a little, she made a sensible remark, and followed it by an embarrassing request. 'A great deal,' she said, 'must depend on the executioner. I am not afraid of death, Doctor. Why should I be? My anxiety

about my little girl is set at rest; I have nothing left to live for. But I don't like pain. Would you mind telling the executioner to be careful? Or would it be better if I spoke to him myself?' I said I thought it would come with a better grace from herself. She understood me directly; and we dropped the subject. Are you surprised at her coolness, after your experience of her?"

I confessed that I was surprised.

"Think a little," the Doctor said. "The one sensitive place in that woman's nature is the place occupied by her self-esteem."

I objected to this that she had shown fondness for her child.

My friend disposed of the objection with his customary readiness.

"The maternal instinct," he said. "A cat is fond of her kittens; a cow is fond of her calf. No, sir, the one cause of that outbreak of passion which so shocked you—a genuine outbreak, beyond all doubt—is to be found in the vanity of a fine feminine creature, overpowered by a horror of looking hideous, even after her death. Do you know I rather like that woman?"

"Is it possible that you are in earnest?" I asked.

"I know as well as you do," he answered, "that this is neither a time nor a place for jesting. The fact is, the Prisoner carries out an idea of mine. It is my positive conviction that the worst murders—I mean murders deliberately planned—are committed by persons absolutely deficient in that part of the moral organization which *feels*. The night before they are hanged, they sleep. On their last morning, they eat a breakfast. Incapable of realizing the horror of murder, they are incapable of realizing the horror of death. Do you remember the last murderer who was hanged here,—a gentleman's coachman who killed his wife? He had but two anxieties while he was waiting for execution. One was to get his allowance of beer doubled, and the other was to be hanged in his coachman's livery. No! No! these wretches are all alike; they are human creatures born with the temperaments of tigers. Take my word for it, we need feel no anxiety about to-morrow. The Prisoner will face the crowd round the scaffold with composure; and the people will say, 'She died game.'"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MINISTER SAYS GOOD-BYE.

THE Capital Punishment of the Prisoner is in no respect connected with my purpose in writing the present narrative. Neither do I desire to darken these pages by describing in detail an act of righteous retribution which must present, by the nature of it, a scene of horror. For these reasons I ask to be excused, if I limit what I must needs say of the execution within the compass of a few words—and pass on.

The one self-possessed person among us was the miserable woman who suffered the penalty of death.

Not very discreetly, as I think, the Chaplain asked her if she had truly repented. She answered, "I have confessed the crime, sir. What more do you want?" To my mind—still hesitating between the view that believes with the Minister, and the view that doubts with the Doctor—this reply leaves a way open to hope of her salvation. Her last words to me, as she mounted the steps of the scaf-

fold, were: "Remember your promise." It was easy for me to be true to my word. At that byegone time, no difficulties were placed in my way by such precautions as are now observed in the conduct of executions within the walls of the prison. From the time of her death to the time of her burial, no living creature saw her face. She rests, veiled, in her prison grave. Let me turn to living interests, and to scenes removed from the thunder-clouds of crime.

* * * * *

On the next day I received a visit from the Minister.

His first words entreated me not to allude to the terrible event of the previous day. "I cannot escape thinking of it," he said, "but I may avoid speaking of it." This seemed to me to be the misplaced confidence of a weak man in the refuge of silence. By way of changing the subject, I spoke of the child. There would be serious difficulties to contend with (as I ventured to suggest), if he remained in the town, and allowed his new responsibilities to become the subject of public talk.

His reply to this agreeably surprised me. There were no difficulties to be feared.

The state of his wife's health had obliged him

(acting under medical advice) to try the influence of her native air. An interval of some months might elapse before the good effect of the change had sufficiently declared itself; and a return to the peculiar climate of the town might bring on a relapse. There had consequently been no alternative but to resign his charge. Only on that day the resignation had been accepted—with expressions of regret sincerely reciprocated by himself. He proposed to leave the town immediately; and one of the objects of his visit was to bid me good-bye.

"The next place I live in," he said, "will be more than a hundred miles away. At that distance I may hope to keep events concealed which must be known only to ourselves. So far as I can see, there are no risks of discovery lurking in this place. My servants (only two in number) have both been born here, and have both told my wife that they have no wish to go away. As to the person who introduced herself to me by the name of Miss Chance, she was traced to the railway station yesterday afternoon, and took her ticket for London."

I congratulated the Minister on the good fortune which had befriended him, so far.

"You will understand how carefully I have provided against being deceived," he continued, "when

I tell you what my plans are. The persons among whom my future lot is cast—and the child herself, of course—must never suspect that the new member of my family is other than my own daughter. This is deceit, I admit; but it is deceit that injures no one. I hope you see the necessity for it, as I do."

There could be no doubt of the necessity.

If the child was described as adopted, there would be curiosity about the circumstances, and inquiries relating to the parents. Prevaricating replies lead to suspicion, and suspicion to discovery. But for the wise course which the Minister had decided on taking, the poor child's life might have been darkened by the horror of the mother's crime, and the infamy of the mother's death.

Having quieted my friend's needless scruples by this perfectly sincere expression of opinion, I ventured to approach the central figure in his domestic circle, by means of a question relating to his wife. How had that lady received the unfortunate little creature, for whose appearance on the home-scene she must have been entirely unprepared?

The Minister's manner showed some embarrassment; he prefaced what he had to tell me with praises of his wife, equally creditable no doubt to

both of them. The beauty of the child, the pretty ways of the child, he said, fascinated that admirable woman at first sight. It was not to be denied that she had felt, and had expressed, misgivings, on being informed of the circumstances under which the Minister's act of mercy had been performed. But her mind was too well balanced to incline to this state of feeling, when her husband had addressed her in defence of his conduct. She then understood that the true merit of a good action consisted in patiently facing the sacrifices involved. Her interest in the new daughter being, in this way, ennobled by a sense of Christian duty, there had been no further difference of opinion between the married pair.

I listened to this plausible explanation with interest, but, at the same time, with doubts of the lasting nature of the lady's submission to circumstances; suggested, perhaps, by the constraint in the Minister's manner. It was well for both of us when we changed the subject. He reminded me of the discouraging view which the Doctor had taken of the prospect before him.

"I will not attempt to decide whether your friend is right or wrong," he said. "Trusting, as I do, in the mercy of God, I look hopefully to a future time

when all that is brightest and best in the nature of my adopted child will be developed under my fostering care. If evil tendencies show themselves, my reliance will be confidently placed on pious example, on religious instruction, and, above all, on intercession by prayer. Repeat to your friend," he concluded, "what you have just heard me say. Let him ask himself if he could confront the uncertain future with my cheerful submisssion and my steadfast hope."

He entrusted me with that message, and gave me his hand. So we parted.

I agreed with him, I admired him; but my faith seemed to want sustaining power, as compared with his faith. On his own showing (as it appeared to me), there would be two forces in a state of conflict in the child's nature as she grew up—inherited evil against inculcated good. Try as I might, I failed to feel the Minister's comforting conviction as to which of the two would win.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GOVERNOR RECEIVES A VISIT.

A FEW days after the good man had left us, I met with a serious accident, caused by a false step on the stone stairs of the prison.

The long illness which followed this misfortune, and my removal afterwards (in the interests of my recovery) to a milder climate than the climate of England, obliged me to confide the duties of governor of the prison to a representative. I was absent from my post for rather more than a year. During this interval no news reached me from my reverend friend.

Having returned to the duties of my office, I thought of writing to the Minister. While the proposed letter was still in contemplation, I was informed that a lady wished to see me. She sent in her card. My visitor proved to be the Minister's wife.

I observed her with no ordinary attention when she entered the room.

Her dress was simple; her scanty light hair, so

far as I could see it under her bonnet, was dressed with taste. The paleness of her lips, and the faded colour in her face, suggested that she was certainly not in good health. Two peculiarities struck me in her personal appearance. I never remembered having seen any other person with such a singularly narrow and slanting forehead as this lady presented; and I was impressed, not at all agreeably, by the flashing, shifting expression in her eyes. On the other hand, let me own that I was powerfully attracted and interested by the beauty of her voice. Its fine variety of compass, and its musical resonance of tone, fell with such enchantment on the ear, that I should have liked to put a book of poetry into her hand, and to have heard her read it in summer-time, accompanied by the music of a rocky stream.

The object of her visit—so far as she explained it at the outset—appeared to be to offer her congratulations on my recovery, and to tell me that her husband had assumed the charge of a church, in a large town not far from her birthplace.

Even those commonplace words were made interesting by her delicious voice. But, however sensitive to sweet sounds a man may be, there are limits to his capacity for deceiving himself—especially when he happens to be enlightened by experience of

humanity within the walls of a prison. I had, it may be remembered, already doubted the lady's good temper, judging from her husband's over-wrought description of her virtues. Her eyes looked at me furtively; and her manner, gracefully self-possessed as it was, suggested that she had something of a delicate, or disagreeable, nature to say to me, and that she was at a loss how to approach the subject so as to produce the right impression on my mind at the outset. There was a momentary silence between us. For the sake of saying something, I asked how she and the Minister liked their new place of residence.

"Our new place of residence," she answered, "has been made interesting by a very unexpected event—an event (how shall I describe it?) which has increased our happiness, and enlarged our family circle."

There she stopped; expecting me, as I fancied, to guess what she meant. A woman, and that woman a mother, might have fulfilled her anticipations. A man, and that man not listening attentively, was simply puzzled.

"Pray excuse my stupidity," I said; "I don't quite understand you."

The lady's temper looked at me out of the lady's

shifting eyes, and hid itself again in a moment. She set herself right in my estimation by taking the whole blame of our little misunderstanding on her own innocent shoulders.

"I ought to have spoken more plainly," she said. "Let me try what I can do now. After many years of disappointment in my married life, it has pleased Providence to bestow on me the happiness—the inexpressible happiness—of being a mother. My baby is a sweet little girl; and my one regret is that I cannot nurse her myself."

My languid interest in the Minister's wife was not stimulated by the announcement of this domestic event.

I felt no wish to see the "sweet little girl;" I was not even reminded of another example of long-deferred maternity, which had occurred within the limits of my own family circle. All my sympathies attached themselves to the sad little figure of the adopted child. I remembered the poor baby on my knee, enchanted by the ticking of my watch—I thought of her, peacefully and prettily asleep under the horrid shelter of the condemned cell—and it is hardly too much to say that my heart was heavy, when I compared her prospects with the prospects of her baby-rival. Kind as he was, conscientious

as he was, could the Minister be expected to admit to an equal share in his love the child endeared to him as a father, and the child who merely reminded him of an act of mercy? As for his wife, it seemed the merest waste of time to put her state of feeling (placed between the two children) to the test of inquiry. I tried the useless experiment nevertheless.

"It is pleasant to think," I began, "that your other daughter——"

She interrupted me, with the utmost gentleness: "Do you mean the child that my husband was foolish enough to adopt?"

"Say rather fortunate enough to adopt," I persisted. "As your own little girl grows up, she will want a playfellow. And she will find a playfellow in that other child, whom the good Minister has taken for his own."

"No, my dear sir—not if I can prevent it."

The contrast between the cruelty of her intention, and the musical beauty of the voice which politely expressed it in those words, really startled me. I was at a loss how to answer her, at the very time when I ought to have been most ready to speak.

"You must surely understand," she went on, "that we don't want another person's child, now we have a little darling of our own?"

"Does your husband agree with you in that view?" I asked.

"Oh dear, no! He said what you said just now, and (oddly enough) almost in the same words. But I don't at all despair of persuading him to change his mind—and you can help me."

She made that audacious assertion with such an appearance of feeling perfectly sure of me, that my politeness gave way under the strain laid on it. "What do you mean?" I asked, sharply.

Not in the least impressed by my change of manner, she took from the pocket of her dress a printed paper. "You will find what I mean there," she replied—and put the paper into my hand.

It was an appeal to the charitable public, occasioned by the enlargement of an orphan-asylum, with which I had been connected for many years. What she meant was plain enough now. I said nothing: I only looked at her.

Pleased to find that I was clever enough to guess what she meant, on this occasion, the Minister's wife informed me that the circumstances were all in our favour. She still persisted in taking me into partnership—the circumstances were in *our* favour.

"In two years more," she explained, "the child of that detestable creature who was hanged—do you

know, I cannot even look at the little wretch without thinking of the gallows?—will be old enough (with your interest to help us) to be received into the asylum. What a relief it will be to get rid of that child! And how hard I shall work at canvassing for subscribers' votes! Your name will be a tower of strength when I use it as a reference. Pardon me—you are not looking so pleasantly as usual. Do you see some obstacles in our way?"

"I see two obstacles."

"What can they possibly be?"

For the second time, my politeness gave way under the strain laid on it. "You know perfectly well," I said, "what one of the obstacles is."

"Am I to understand that you contemplate any serious resistance on the part of my husband?"

"Certainly!"

She was unaffectedly amused by my simplicity.

"Are you a single man?" she asked.

"I am a widower."

"Then your experience ought to tell you that I know every weak point in the Minister's character. I can tell him, on your authority, that the hateful child will be placed in competent and kindly hands —and I have my own sweet baby to plead for me. With these advantages in my favour, do you actually

suppose I can fail to make *my* way of thinking *his* way of thinking? You must have forgotten your own married life! Suppose we go on to the second of your two obstacles. I hope it will be better worth considering than the first."

"The second obstacle will not disappoint you," I answered; "I am the obstacle, this time."

"You refuse to help me?"

"Positively."

"Perhaps reflection may alter your resolution?"

"Reflection will do nothing of the kind."

"You are rude, sir!"

"In speaking to you, madam, I have no alternative but to speak plainly."

She rose. Her shifting eyes, for once, looked at me steadily.

"What sort of enemy have I made of you?" she asked. "A passive enemy who is content with refusing to help me? Or an active enemy who will write to my husband?"

"It depends entirely," I told her, "on what your husband does. If he questions me about you, I shall tell him the truth."

"And if not?"

"In that case, I shall hope to forget that you ever favoured me with a visit."

In making this reply I was guiltless of any malicious intention. What evil interpretation she placed on my words it is impossible for me to say; I can only declare that some intolerable sense of injury hurried her into an outbreak of rage. Her voice, strained for the first time, lost its tuneful beauty of tone.

"Come and see us in two years' time," she burst out—"and discover the orphan of the gallows in our house if you can! If your Asylum won't take her, some other Charity will. Ha, Mr. Governor, I deserve my disappointment! I ought to have remembered that you are only a gaoler after all. And what is a gaoler? Proverbially a brute. Do you hear that? A brute?"

Her strength suddenly failed her. She dropped back into the chair from which she had risen, with a faint cry of pain. A ghastly pallor stole over her face. There was wine on the sideboard; I filled a glass. She refused to take it. At that time in the day, the Doctor's duties required his attendance in the prison. I instantly sent for him. After a moment's look at her, he took the wine out of my hand, and held the glass to her lips.

"Drink it," he said. She still refused. "Drink it," he reiterated, "or you will die."

That frightened her; she drank the wine. The Doctor waited for awhile with his fingers on her pulse. "She will do now," he said.

"Can I go?" she asked.

"Go wherever you please, madam—so long as you don't go upstairs in a hurry."

She smiled: "I understand you, sir—and thank you for your advice."

I asked the Doctor, when we were alone, what made him tell her not to go upstairs in a hurry.

"What I felt," he answered, "when I had my fingers on her pulse. You heard her say that she understood me."

"Yes; but I don't know what she meant."

"She meant, probably, that her own doctor had warned her as I did."

"Something seriously wrong with her health?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"Heart."

CHAPTER X.

MISS CHANCE REAPPEARS.

A WEEK had passed, since the Minister's wife had left me, when I received a letter from the Minister himself.

After surprising me, as he innocently supposed, by announcing the birth of his child, he mentioned some circumstances connected with that event, which I now heard for the first time.

"Within an easy journey of the populous scene of my present labours," he wrote, "there is a secluded country village called Low Lanes. The rector of the place is my wife's brother. Before the birth of our infant, he had asked his sister to stay for awhile at his house; and the doctor thought she might safely be allowed to accept the invitation. Through some error in the customary calculations, as I suppose, the child was born unexpectedly at the rectory; and the ceremony of baptism was performed at the church, under circumstances which I am not able to relate within the limits of a letter. Let me only say that I allude to this incident

without any sectarian bitterness of feeling—for I am no enemy to the Church of England. You have no idea what treasures of virtue and treasures of beauty, maternity has revealed in my wife's sweet nature. Other mothers, in her proud position, might find their love cooling towards the poor child whom we have adopted. But my household is irradiated by the presence of an angel, who gives an equal share in her affections to the two little ones alike."

In this semi-hysterical style of writing, the poor man unconsciously told me how cunningly and how cruelly his wife was deceiving him.

I longed to exhibit that wicked woman in her true character—but what could I do? She must have been so favoured by circumstances as to be able to account for her absence from home, without exciting the slightest suspicion of the journey which she had really taken. If I declared in my reply to the Minister's letter, that I had received her in my rooms, and if I repeated the conversation that had taken place, what would the result be? She would find an easy refuge in positive denial of the truth—and, in that case, which of us would her infatuated husband believe?

The one part of the letter which I read with some satisfaction was the end of it.

I was here informed that the Minister's plans for concealing the parentage of his adopted daughter had proved to be entirely successful. The members of the new domestic household believed the two children to be infant-sisters. Neither was there any danger of the adopted child being identified (as the oldest child of the two) by consultation of the registers.

Before he left our town, the Minister had seen for himself that no baptismal name had been added, after the birth of the daughter of the murderess had been registered, and that no entry of baptism existed in the registers kept in places of worship. He drew the inference—in all probability a true inference, considering the characters of the parents—that the child had never been baptized; and he performed the ceremony privately, abstaining, for obvious reasons, from adding her Christian name to the imperfect register of her birth. "I am not aware," he wrote, "whether I have, or have not, committed an offence against the Law. In any case, I may hope to have made atonement by obedience to the Gospel."

Six weeks passed, and I heard from my reverend friend once more.

His second letter presented a marked contrast

to the first. It was written in sorrow and anxiety, to inform me of an alarming change for the worse in his wife's health. I showed the letter to my medical colleague. After reading it he predicted the event that might be expected, in two words:—Sudden death.

On the next occasion when I heard from the Minister, the Doctor's grim reply proved to be a prophecy fulfilled.

When we address expressions of condolence to bereaved friends, the principles of popular hypocrisy sanction indiscriminate lying as a duty which we owe to the dead—no matter what their lives may have been—because they are dead. Within my own little sphere, I have always been silent, when I could not offer to afflicted persons expressions of sympathy which I honestly felt. To have condoled with the Minister on the loss that he had sustained by the death of a woman, self-betrayed to me as shamelessly deceitful, and pitilessly determined to reach her own cruel ends, would have been to degrade myself by telling a deliberate lie. I expressed in my answer all that an honest man naturally feels, when he is writing to a friend in distress; carefully abstaining from any allusion to the memory of his wife, or to the place which her death had left vacant

in his household. My letter, I am sorry to say, disappointed and offended him. He wrote to me no more, until years had passed, and time had exerted its influence in producing a more indulgent frame of mind. These letters of a later date have been preserved, and will probably be used, at the right time, for purposes of explanation with which I may be connected in the future.

* * * * *

The correspondent whom I had now lost was succeeded by a gentleman entirely unknown to me.

Those reasons which induced me to conceal the names of persons, while I was relating events in the prison, do not apply to correspondence with a stranger writing from another place. I may, therefore, mention that Mr. Dunboyne, of Fairmount, on the west coast of Ireland, was the writer of the letter now addressed to me. He proved, to my surprise, to be one of the relations, whom the Prisoner under sentence of death had not cared to see, when I offered her the opportunity of saying farewell. Mr. Dunboyne was a brother-in-law of the murderess. He had married her sister.

His wife, he informed me, had died in childbirth, leaving him but one consolation—a boy, who already recalled all that was brightest and best in

his lost mother. The father was naturally anxious that the son should never become acquainted with the disgrace that had befallen the family.

The letter then proceeded in these terms:

"I heard yesterday, for the first time, by means of an old newspaper-cutting sent to me by a friend, that the miserable woman who suffered the ignominy of public execution has left an infant child. Can you tell me what has become of the orphan? If this little girl is, as I fear, not well provided for, I only do what my wife would have done if she had lived, by offering to make the child's welfare my especial care. I am willing to place her in an establishment well known to me, in which she will be kindly treated, well educated, and fitted to earn her own living honourably in later life.

"If you feel some surprise at finding that my good intentions towards this ill-fated niece of mine do not go to the length of receiving her as a member of my own family, I beg to submit some considerations which may perhaps weigh with you as they have weighed with me.

"In the first place, there is at least a possibility —however carefully I might try to conceal it—that the child's parentage would sooner or later be discovered. In the second place (and assuming that

the parentage had been successfully concealed), if this girl and my boy grew up together, there is another possibility to be reckoned with: they might become attached to each other. Does the father live who would allow his son ignorantly to marry the daughter of a convicted murderess? I should have no alternative but to part them cruelly by revealing the truth."

The letter ended with some complimentary expressions addressed to myself. And the question was: how ought I to answer it?

My correspondent had strongly impressed me in his favour; I could not doubt that he was an honourable man. But the interest of the Minister in keeping his own benevolent action secure from the risk of discovery—increased as that interest was by the filial relations of the two children towards him, now publicly established—had, as I could not doubt, the paramount claim on me. The absolutely safe course to take was to admit no one, friend or stranger, to our confidence. I replied, expressing sincere admiration of Mr. Dunboyne's motives, and merely informing him that the child was already provided for.

After that, I heard no more of the Irish gentleman.

It is perhaps hardly necessary to add that I kept

the Minister in ignorance of my correspondence with Mr. Dunboyne. I was too well acquainted with my friend's sensitive and self-tormenting nature to let him know that a relative of the murderess was living, and was aware that she had left a child.

A last event remains to be related, before I close these pages.

During the year of which I am now writing, our Chaplain added one more to the many examples that I have seen of his generous readiness to serve his friends. He had arranged to devote his annual leave of absence to a tour among the English Lakes, when he received a letter from a clergyman resident in London, whom he had known from the time when they had been schoolfellows. This old friend wrote under circumstances of the severest domestic distress, which made it absolutely necessary that he should leave London for awhile. Having failed to find a representative who could relieve him of his clerical duties, he applied to the Chaplain to recommend a clergyman who might be in a position to help him. My excellent colleague gave up his holiday-plans without hesitation, and went to London himself.

On his return, I asked if he had seen anything of some acquaintances of his and of mine, who were

then visitors to the metropolis. He smiled significantly when he answered me.

"I have a card to deliver from an acquaintance whom you have not mentioned," he said; "and I rather think it will astonish you."

It simply puzzled me. When he gave me the card, this is what I found printed on it:

"MRS. TENBRUGGEN (OF SOUTH BEVELAND)."

"Well?" said the Chaplain.

"Well," I answered; "I never even heard of Mrs. Tenbruggen, of South Beveland. Who is she?"

"I married the lady to a foreign gentleman, only last week, at my friend's church," the Chaplain replied. "Perhaps you may remember her maiden name?"

He mentioned the name of the dangerous creature who had first presented herself to me, in charge of the Prisoner's child—otherwise Miss Elizabeth Chance. The reappearance of this woman on the scene—although she was only represented by her card—caused me a feeling of vague uneasiness, so contemptibly superstitious in its nature, that I now remember it with shame. I asked a stupid question:

"How did it happen?"

"In the ordinary course of such things," my friend said. "They were married by license, in

their parish church. The bridegroom was a fine tall man, with a bold eye and a dashing manner. The bride and I recognised each other directly. When Miss Chance had become Mrs. Tenbruggen, she took me aside, and gave me her card. 'Ask the Governor to accept it,' she said, 'in remembrance of the time when he took me for a nursemaid. Tell him I am married to a Dutch gentleman of high family. If he ever comes to Holland, we shall be glad to see him in our residence at South Beveland.' There is her message to you, repeated word for word."

"I am glad she is going to live out of England."

"Why? Surely you have no reason to fear her?"

"None whatever."

"You are thinking perhaps of somebody else?"

I was thinking of the Minister; but it seemed to be safest not to say so.

My pen is laid aside, and my many pages of writing have been sent to their destination. What I undertook to do, is now done. To take a metaphor from the stage—the curtain falls here on the Governor and the Prison.

SECOND PERIOD: 1875.

THE GIRLS AND THE JOURNALS.

CHAPTER XI.

HELENA'S DIARY.

We both said good-night, and went up to our room with a new object in view. By our father's advice we had resolved on keeping diaries, for the first time in our lives, and had pledged ourselves to begin before we went to bed.

Slowly and silently and lazily, my sister sauntered to her end of the room, and seated herself at her writing-table. On the desk lay a nicely bound book, full of blank pages. The word "Journal" was printed on it in gold letters, and there was fitted to the covers a bright brass lock and key. A second journal, exactly similar in every respect to the first, was placed on the writing-table at my end of the room. I opened my book. The sight of the blank leaves irritated me; they were so smooth, so spotless, so entirely ready to do *their* duty. I took too deep a dip of ink, and began the first entry in my diary by making a blot. This was discouraging. I got up, and looked out of window.

"Helena!"

My sister's voice could hardly have addressed me in a more weary tone, if her pen had been at work all night, relating domestic events. "Well!" I said. "What is it?"

"Have you done already?" she asked.

I showed her the blot. My sister Eunice (the strangest as well as the dearest of girls) always blurts out what she has in her mind at the time. She fixed her eyes gravely on my spoilt page, and said: "That comforts me." I crossed the room, and looked at her book. She had not even summoned energy enough to make a blot. "What will Papa think of us," she said, "if we don't begin to-night?"

"Why not begin," I suggested, "by writing down what he said, when he gave us our journals? Those wise words of advice will be in their proper place on the first page of the new books."

Not at all a demonstrative girl naturally; not ready with her tears, not liberal with her caresses, not fluent in her talk, Eunice was affected by my proposal in a manner wonderful to see. She suddenly developed into an excitable person—I declare she kissed me. "Oh," she burst out, "how clever you are! The very thing to write about; I'll do it directly."

She really did it directly; without once stopping

to consider, without once waiting to ask my advice. Line after line, I heard her noisy pen hurrying to the bottom of a first page, and getting three-parts of the way towards the end of a second page, before she closed her diary. I reminded her that she had not turned the key, in the lock which was intended to keep her writing private.

"It's not worth while," she answered. "Anybody who cares to do it may read what I write. Good-night."

The singular change which I had noticed in her began to disappear, when she set about her preparations for bed. I noticed the old easy indolent movements again, and that regular and deliberate method of brushing her hair, which I can never contemplate without feeling a stupefying influence that has helped me to many a delicious night's sleep. She said her prayers in her favourite corner of the room, and laid her head on the pillow with the luxurious little sigh which announces that she is falling asleep. This reappearance of her usual habits was really a relief to me. Eunice in a state of excitement, is Eunice exhibiting an unnatural spectacle.

The next thing I did was to take the liberty which she had already sanctioned—I mean the liberty of reading what she had written. Here it is, copied exactly:

"I am not half so fond of anybody as I am of Papa. He is always kind, he is always right. I love him, I love him, I love him.

"But this is not how I meant to begin. I must tell how he talked to us; I wish he was here to tell it himself.

"He said to me: 'You are getting lazier than ever, Eunice.' He said to Helena: 'You are feeling the influence of Eunice's example.' He said to both of us: 'You are too ready, my dear children, to sit with your hands on your laps, looking at nothing and thinking of nothing; I want to try a new way of employing your leisure time.'

"He opened a parcel on the table. He made each of us a present of a beautiful book, called 'Journal.' He said: 'When you have nothing to do, my dears, in the evening, employ yourselves in keeping a diary of the events of the day. It will be a useful record in many ways, and a good moral discipline for young girls.' Helena said: 'Oh, thank you!' I said the same, but not so cheerfully.

"The truth is, I feel out of spirits now if I think of Papa; I am not easy in my mind about him. When he is very much interested, there is a quivering in his face which I don't remember in past times. He seems to have got older and thinner, all

on a sudden. He shouts (which he never used to do) when he threatens sinners at sermon-time. Being in dreadful earnest about our souls, he is of course obliged to speak of the devil; but he never used to hit the harmless pulpit cushion with his fist, as he does now. Nobody seems to have seen these things but me; and now I have noticed them what ought I to do? I don't know; I am certain of nothing, except what I have put in at the top of page one: —I love him, I love him, I love him."

* * * * *

There this curious entry ended. It was easy enough to discover the influence which had made my slow-minded sister so ready with her memory and her pen—so ready, in short, to do anything and everything, provided her heart was in it, and her father was in it.

But Eunice is wrong, let me tell her, in what she says of myself.

I, too, have seen the sad change in my father; but I happen to know that he dislikes having it spoken of at home, and I have kept my painful discoveries to myself. Unhappily, the best medical advice is beyond our reach. The one really competent doctor in this place is known to be an infidel. But for that shocking obstacle I might have

persuaded my father to see him. As for the other two doctors whom he has consulted, at different times, one talked about suppressed gout, and the other told him to take a year's holiday and enjoy himself on the Continent.

The clock has just struck twelve. I have been writing and copying till my eyes are heavy, and I want to follow Eunice's example and sleep as soundly as she does. We have made a strange beginning of this journalizing experiment. I wonder how long it will go on, and what will come of it.

SECOND DAY.

I begin to be afraid that I am as stupid—no; that is not a nice word to use—let me say, as simple as dear Eunice. A diary means a record of the events of the day; and not one of the events of yesterday appears in my sister's journal or in mine. Well, it is easy to set that mistake right. Our lives are so dull (but I would not say so in my father's hearing, for the world) that the record of one day will be much the same as the record of another.

After family prayers and breakfast I suffer my customary persecution at the hands of the cook. That is to say, I am obliged, being the housekeeper, to order what we have to eat. Oh, how I

hate inventing dinners! and how I admire the enviable slowness of mind and laziness of body which have saved Eunice from undertaking the worries of housekeeping in her turn! She can go and work in her garden, while I am racking my invention to discover variety in dishes without overstepping the limits of economy. I suppose I may confess it privately to myself—how sorry I am not to have been born a man!

My next employment leads me to my father's study, to write under his dictation. I don't complain of this; it flatters my pride to feel that I am helping so great a man. At the same time, I do notice that here, again, Eunice's little defects have relieved her of another responsibility. She can neither keep dictated words in her memory, nor has she ever been able to learn how to put in her stops.

After the dictation, I have an hour's time left for practising music. My sister comes in from the garden, with her pencil and paint-box, and practises drawing. Then we go out for a walk—a delightful walk, if my father goes too. He has something always new to tell us, suggested by what we pass on the way. Then, dinner time comes—not always a pleasant part of the day to me. Sometimes I hear

paternal complaints (always gentle complaints) of my housekeeping; sometimes my sister (I won't say my greedy sister) tells me I have not given her enough to eat. Poor father! Dear Eunice!

Dinner having reached its end, we stroll in the garden when the weather is fine. When it rains, we make flannel petticoats for poor old women. What a horrid thing old age is to look at! To be ugly, to be helpless, to be miserably unfit for all the pleasures of life—I hope I shall not live to be an old woman. What would my father say if he saw this? For his sake, to say nothing of my own feelings, I shall do well if I make it a custom to use the lock of my journal.

Our next occupation is to join the Scripture class for girls, and to help the teacher. This is a good discipline for Eunice's temper, and—oh, I don't deny it!—for my temper too. I may long to box the ears of the whole class, but it is my duty to keep a smiling face and to be a model of patience. From the Scripture class we sometimes go to my father's lecture. At other times, we may amuse ourselves as well as we can till the tea is ready. After tea we read books which instruct us, poetry and novels being forbidden. When we are tired of the books we talk. When supper is over,

we have prayers again, and we go to bed. There is our day. Oh, dear me! there is our day.

* * * * * *

And how has Eunice succeeded in her second attempt at keeping a diary? Here is what she has written. It has one merit that nobody can deny—it is soon read:

"I hope Papa will excuse me; I have nothing to write about to-day."

Over and over again, I have tried to point out to my sister the absurdity of calling her father by the infantine nick-name of Papa. I have reminded her that she is (in years, at least) no longer a child. "Why don't you call him father, as I do?" I asked only the other day.

She made an absurd reply: "I used to call him Papa when I was a little girl."

"That," I reminded her, "doesn't justify you in calling him Papa now."

And she actually answered: "Yes, it does." What a strange state of mind! And what a charming girl, in spite of her mind!

THIRD DAY.

The morning post has brought with it a promise of some little variety in our lives—or, to speak more correctly, in the life of my sister.

Our new and nice friends, the Staveleys, have written to invite Eunice to pay them a visit at their house in London. I don't complain of being left at home. It would be unfilial indeed if we both of us forsook our father; and last year it was my turn to receive the first invitation, and to enjoy the change of scene. The Staveleys are excellent people—strictly pious members of the Methodist connection—and exceedingly kind to my sister and me. But it was just as well for my moral welfare that I ended my visit to our friends when I did. With my fondness for music, I felt the temptation of the Evil One trying me, when I saw placards in the street announcing that the Italian Opera was open. I had no wish to be a witness of the shameful and sinful dancing which goes on (I am told) at the opera; but I did feel my principles shaken when I thought of the wonderful singers and the entrancing music. And this, when I knew what an atmosphere of wickedness people breathe who enter a theatre! I reflect with horror on what *might* have happened if I had remained a little longer in London.

Helping Eunice to pack up, I put her journal into the box.

"You will find something to write about now," I told her. "While I record everything that happens

at home, you will keep your diary of all that you do in London, and when you come back we will show each other what we have written." My sister is a dear creature. "I don't feel sure of being able to do it," she answered; "but I promise to try." Good Eunice!

CHAPTER XII.

EUNICE'S DIARY.

THE air of London feels very heavy. There is a nasty smell of smoke in London. There are too many people in London. They seem to be mostly people in a hurry. The head of a country girl, when she goes into the streets, turns giddy—I suppose through not being used to the noise.

I do hope that it is London that has put me out of temper. Otherwise, it must be I myself who am ill-tempered. I have not yet been one whole day in the Staveleys' house, and they have offended me already. I don't want Helena to hear of this from other people, and then to ask me why I concealed it from her. We are to read each other's journals when we are both at home again. Let her see what I have to say for myself here.

There are seven Staveleys in all: Mr. and Mrs. (two); three young Masters (five); two young Misses (seven). An eldest Miss and a second young Master are the only ones at home at the present time.

Mr., Mrs., and Miss kissed me when I arrived. Young Master only shook hands. He looked as if he would have liked to kiss me too. Why shouldn't he? It wouldn't have mattered. I don't myself like kissing. What is the use of it? Where is the pleasure of it?

Mrs. was so glad to see me; she took hold of me by both hands. She said: "My dear child, you are improving. You were wretchedly thin when I saw you last. Now you are almost as well developed as your sister. I think you are prettier than your sister." Mr. didn't agree to that. He and his wife began to dispute about me before my face. I do call that an aggravating thing to endure.

Mr. said: "She hasn't got her sister's pretty gray eyes."

Mrs. said: "She has got pretty brown eyes, which are just as good."

Mr. said: "You can't compare her complexion with Helena's."

Mrs. said: "I like Eunice's pale complexion. So delicate."

Young Miss struck in: "I admire Helena's hair —light brown."

Young Master took his turn: "I prefer Eunice's hair—dark brown."

Mr. opened his great big mouth, and asked a question: "Which of you two sisters is the oldest? I forget."

Mrs. answered for me: "Helena is the oldest; she told us so when she was here last."

I really could *not* stand that. "You must be mistaken," I burst out.

"Certainly not, my dear."

"Then Helena was mistaken." I was unwilling to say of my sister that she had been deceiving them, though it did seem only too likely.

Mr. and Mrs. looked at each other. Mrs. said: "You seem to be very positive, Eunice. Surely, Helena ought to know."

I said: "Helena knows a good deal; but she doesn't know which of us is the oldest of the two."

Mr. put in another question: "Do *you* know?"

"No more than Helena does."

Mrs. said: "Don't you keep birthdays?"

I said: "Yes; we keep both our birthdays on the same day."

"On what day?"

"The first day of the New Year."

Mr. tried again: "You can't possibly be twins?"

"I don't know."

"Perhaps Helena knows?"

"Not she!"

Mrs. took the next question out of her husband's mouth: "Come, come, my dear! you must know how old you are."

"Yes; I do know that. I'm eighteen."

"And how old is Helena?"

"Helena's eighteen."

Mrs. turned round to Mr.: "Do you hear that!"

Mr. said: "I shall write to her father, and ask what it means." I said: "Papa will only tell you what he told us—years ago."

"What did your father say?"

"He said he had added our two ages together, and he meant to divide the product between us. It's so long since, I don't remember what the product was then. But I'll tell you what the product is now. Our two ages come to thirty-six. Half thirty-six is eighteen. I get one half, and Helena gets the other. When we ask what it means, and when friends ask what it means, Papa has got the same answer for everybody, 'I have my reasons.' That's all he says—and that's all I say."

I had no intention of making Mr. angry, but he did get angry. He left off speaking to me by my Christian name; he called me by my surname. He said: "Let me tell you, Miss Gracedieu, it is not becoming in a young lady to mystify her elders."

I had heard that it was respectful in a young lady to call an old gentleman, Sir, and to say, If you please. I took care to be respectful now. "If you please, sir, write to Papa. You will find that I have spoken the truth."

A woman opened the door, and said to Mrs. Staveley: "Dinner, Ma'am." That stopped this nasty exhibition of our tempers. We had a very good dinner.

* * * * * *

The next day I wrote to Helena, asking her what she had really said to the Staveleys about her age and mine, and telling her what I had said. I found it too great a trial of my patience to wait till she could see what I had written about the dispute in my journal. The days, since then, have passed, and I have been too lazy and stupid to keep my diary.

To-day, it is different. My head is like a dark room with the light let into it. I remember things; I think I can go on again.

BAYERISCHE STAATS- BIBLIOTHEK MÜNCHEN

We have religious exercises in this house, morning and evening, just as we do at home. (Not to be compared with Papa's religious exercises.) Two days ago his answer came to Mr. Staveley's letter. He did just what I had expected—said I had spoken truly, and disappointed the family by asking to be excused if he refrained from entering into explanations. Mr. said: "Very odd;" and Mrs. agreed with him. Young Miss is not quite as friendly now, as she was at first. And young Master was impudent enough to ask me if "I had got religion." To conclude the list of my worries, I received an angry answer from Helena. "Nobody but a simpleton," she wrote, "would have contradicted me as you did. Who but you could have failed to see that Papa's strange objection to let it be known which of us is the elder makes us ridiculous before other people? My presence of mind prevented that. You ought to have been grateful, and have held your tongue." Perhaps Helena is right—but I don't feel it so.

On Sunday, we went to chapel twice. We also had a sermon read at home, and a cold dinner. In the evening, a hot dispute on religion between Mr. Staveley and his son. I don't blame them. After being pious all day long on Sunday, I have myself felt my piety give way towards evening.

There is something pleasant in prospect for to-morrow. All London is going just now to the exhibition of pictures. We are going with all London.

* * * * * *

I don't know what is the matter with me to-night. I have positively been to bed, without going to sleep! After tossing and twisting and trying all sorts of positions, I am so angry with myself that I have got up again. Rather than do nothing, I have opened my ink-bottle, and I mean to go on with my journal.

Now I think of it, it seems likely that the exhibition of works of art may have upset me.

I found a dreadfully large number of pictures, matched by a dreadfully large number of people to look at them. It is not possible for me to write about what I saw: there was too much of it. Besides, the show disappointed me. I would rather write about a disagreement (oh, dear, another dispute!) I had with Mrs. Staveley. The cause of it was a famous artist; not himself, but his works. He exhibited four pictures—what they call figure subjects. Mrs. Staveley had a pencil. At every one of the great man's four pictures, she made a big mark of admiration on her catalogue. At the fourth one, she spoke to me: "Perfectly beautiful, Eunice, isn't it?"

I said I didn't know. She said: "You strange girl, what do you mean by that?"

It would have been rude not to have given the best answer I could find. I said: "I never saw the flesh of any person's face like the flesh in the faces which that man paints. He reminds me of wax-work. Why does he paint the same waxy flesh in all four of his pictures? I don't see the same coloured flesh in all the faces about us." Mrs. Staveley held up her hand, by way of stopping me. She said: "Don't speak so loud, Eunice; you are only exposing your own ignorance."

A voice behind us joined in. The voice said: "Excuse me, Mrs. Staveley, if I expose *my* ignorance. I entirely agree with the young lady."

I felt grateful to the person who took my part, just when I was at a loss what to say for myself, and I looked round. The person was a young gentleman.

He wore a beautiful blue frock-coat, buttoned up. I like a frock-coat to be buttoned up. He had light-coloured trousers and gray gloves and a pretty cane. I like light-coloured trousers and gray gloves and a pretty cane. What colour his eyes were is more than I can say; I only know they made me hot when they looked at me. Not that I mind being

made hot; it is surely better than being made cold. He and Mrs. Staveley shook hands.

They seemed to be old friends. I wished I had been an old friend—not for any bad reason, I hope. I only wanted to shake hands, too. What Mrs. Staveley said to him escaped me somehow. I think the pictures escaped me also; I don't remember noticing anything except the young gentleman, especially when he took off his hat to me. He looked at me twice before he went away. I got hot again. I said to Mrs. Staveley: "Who is he?"

She laughed at me. I said again: "Who is he?" She said: "He is young Mr. Dunboyne." I said: "Does he live in London?" She laughed again. I said again: "Does he live in London?" She said: "He is here for a holiday; he lives with his father at Fairmount in Ireland."

Young Mr. Dunboyne—here for a holiday—lives with his father at Fairmount in Ireland. I have said that to myself fifty times over. And here it is, saying itself for the fifty-first time in my journal. I must indeed be a simpleton, as Helena says. I had better go to bed again.

CHAPTER XIII.

EUNICE'S DIARY.

Not long before I left home, I heard one of our two servants telling the other about a person who had been "bewitched." Are you bewitched when you don't understand your own self? That has been my curious case, since I returned from the picture-show. This morning I took my drawing materials out of my box, and tried to make a portrait of young Mr. Dunboyne from recollection. I succeeded pretty well with his frock-coat and cane: but, try as I might, his face was beyond me. I have never drawn anything so badly since I was a little girl; I almost felt ready to cry. What a fool I am!

This morning I received a letter from Papa —it was in reply to a letter that I had written to him—so kind, so beautifully expressed, so like himself that I felt inclined to send him a confession of the strange state of feeling that has come over me, and to ask him to comfort and advise me. On second thoughts, I was afraid to do it. Afraid of

Papa! I am farther away from understanding myself than ever.

Mr. Dunboyne paid us a visit in the afternoon. Fortunately, before we went out.

I thought I would have a good look at him; so as to know his face better than I had known it yet. Another disappointment was in store for me. Without intending it, I am sure, he did what no other young man has ever done—he made me feel confused. Instead of looking at him, I sat with my head down, and listened to his talk. His voice—this is high praise—reminded me of Papa's voice. It seemed to persuade me as Papa persuades his congregation. I felt quite at ease again. When he went away, we shook hands. He gave my hand a little squeeze. I gave him back the squeeze—without knowing why. When he was gone, I wished I had not done it—without knowing why, either.

I heard his Christian name for the first time, to-day. Mrs. Staveley said to me: "We are going to have a dinner-party. Shall I ask Philip Dunboyne?" I said to Mrs. Staveley: "Oh, do!"

She is an old woman; her eyes are dim. At times, she can look mischievous. She looked at me mischievously, now. I wished I had not been so eager to have Mr. Dunboyne asked to dinner. A

fear has come to me that I may have degraded myself. My spirits are depressed. This, as Papa tells us in his sermons, is a miserable world. I am sorry I accepted the Staveleys' invitation. I am sorry I went to see the pictures. When that young man comes to dinner, I shall say I have got a headache, and shall stop upstairs by myself. I don't think I like his Christian name. I hate London. I hate everybody.

What I wrote up above, yesterday, is nonsense. I think his Christian name is perfect. I like London. I love everybody.

He came to dinner to-day. I sat next to him. How beautiful a dress-coat is, and a white cravat! We talked. He wanted to know what my Christian name was. I was so pleased when I found he was one of the few people who like it. His hair curls naturally. In colour, it is something between my hair and Helena's. He wears his beard. How manly! It curls naturally like his hair; it smells deliciously of some perfume which is new to me. He has white hands; his nails look as if he polished them; I should like to polish my nails, if I knew how. Whatever I said, he agreed with me; I felt satisfied with my own conversation, for the first time in my

life. Helena won't find me a simpleton when I go home. What exquisite things dinner-parties are!

My sister told me (when we said good-bye) to be particular in writing down my true opinion of the Staveleys. Helena wishes to compare what she thinks of them with what I think of them.

My opinion of Mr. Staveley is—I don't like him. My opinion of Miss Staveley is—I can't endure her. As for Master Staveley, my clever sister will understand that *he* is beneath notice. But, oh, what a wonderful woman Mrs. Staveley is! We went out together, after luncheon to-day, for a walk in Kensington Gardens. Never have I heard any conversation to compare with Mrs. Staveley's. Helena shall enjoy it here, at second hand. I am quite changed in two things. First: I think more of myself than I ever did before. Second: writing is no longer a difficulty to me. I could fill a hundred journals, without once stopping to think.

Mrs. Staveley began nicely: "I suppose, Eunice, you have often been told that you have a good figure, and that you walk well?"

I said: "Helena thinks my figure is better than my face. But do I really walk well? Nobody ever told me that."

She answered: "Philip Dunboyne thinks so. He said to me, 'I resist the temptation because I might be wanting in respect if I gave way to it. But I should like to follow her when she goes out—merely for the pleasure of seeing her walk.'"

I stood stock-still. I said nothing. When you are as proud as a peacock (which never happened to me before), I find you can't move and can't talk. You can only enjoy yourself.

Kind Mrs. Staveley had more things to tell me. She said: "I am interested in Philip. I lived near Fairmount in the time before I was married; and in those days he was a child. I want him to marry a charming girl, and be happy."

What made me think directly of Miss Staveley? What made me mad to know if she was the charming girl? I was bold enough to ask the question. Mrs. Staveley turned to me with that mischievous look which I have noticed already. I felt as if I had been running at the top of my speed, and had not got my breath again, yet.

But this good motherly friend set me at my ease. She explained herself: "Philip is not much liked, poor fellow, in our house. My husband considers him to be weak and vain and fickle. And my daughter agrees with her father. There are

times when she is barely civil to Philip. He is too good-natured to complain, but *I* see it. Tell me, my dear, do you like Philip?"

"Of course I do!" Out it came in those words, before I could stop it. Was there something unbecoming to a young lady in saying what I had just said? Mrs. Staveley seemed to be more amused than angry with me. She took my arm kindly, and led me along with her. "My dear, you are as clear as crystal, and as true as steel. You are a favourite of mine already."

What a delightful woman! as I said just now. I asked if she really liked me as well as she liked my sister.

She said: "Better."

I didn't expect that, and didn't want it. Helena is my superior. She is prettier than I am, cleverer than I am, better worth liking than I am. Mrs. Staveley shifted the talk back to Philip. I ought to have said Mr. Philip. No, I won't; I shall call him Philip. If I had a heart of stone, I should feel interested in him, after what Mrs. Staveley has told me.

Such a sad story, in some respects. Mother, dead; no brothers or sisters. Only the father left; he lives a dismal life on a lonely stormy coast. Not

a severe old gentleman, for all that. His reasons for taking to retirement are reasons (so Mrs. Staveley says) which nobody knows. He buries himself among his books, in an immense library; and he appears to like it. His son has not been brought up, like other young men, at school and college. He is a great scholar, educated at home by his father. To hear this account of his learning depressed me. It seemed to put such a distance between us. I asked Mrs. Staveley if he thought me ignorant. As long as I live I shall remember the reply: "He thinks you charming."

Any other girl would have been satisfied with this. I am the miserable creature who is always making mistakes. My stupid curiosity spoilt the charm of Mrs. Staveley's conversation. And yet it seemed to be a harmless question; I only said I should like to know what profession Philip belonged to.

Mrs. Staveley answered: "No profession."

I foolishly put a wrong meaning on this. I said: "Is he idle?"

Mrs. Staveley laughed. "My dear, he is an only son—and his father is a rich man."

That stopped me—at last.

We have enough to live on in comfort at home

—no more. Papa has told us himself that he is not (and can never hope to be) a rich man. This is not the worst of it. Last year, he refused to marry a young couple, both belonging to our congregation. This was very unlike his usual kind self. Helena and I asked him for his reasons. They were reasons that did not take long to give. The young gentleman's father was a rich man. He had forbidden his son to marry a sweet girl—because she had no fortune.

I have no fortune. And Philip's father is a rich man.

The best thing I can do is to wipe my pen, and shut up my Journal, and go home by the next train.

* * * * *

I have a great mind to burn my Journal. It tells me that I had better not think of Philip any more.

On second thoughts, I won't destroy my Journal; I will only put it away. If I live to be an old woman, it may amuse me to open my book again, and see how foolish the poor wretch was when she was young.

What is this aching pain in my heart?

I don't remember it at any other time in my

life. Is it trouble? How can I tell?—I have had so little trouble. It must be many years since I was wretched enough to cry. I don't even understand why I am crying now. My last sorrow, so far as I can remember, was the toothache. Other girls' mothers comfort them when they are wretched. If my mother had lived—it's useless to think about that. We lost her, while I and my sister were too young to understand our misfortune.

I wish I had never seen Philip.

This seems an ungrateful wish. Seeing him at the picture-show was a new enjoyment. Sitting next to him at dinner was a happiness that I don't recollect feeling, even when Papa has been most sweet and kind to me. I ought to be ashamed of myself to confess this. Shall I write to my sister? But how should she know what is the matter with me, when I don't know it myself? Besides, Helena is angry; she wrote unkindly to me when she answered my last letter.

There is a dreadful loneliness in this great house at night. I had better say my prayers, and try to sleep. If it doesn't make me feel happier, it will prevent me spoiling my Journal by dropping tears on it.

* * * * *

What an evening of evenings this has been! Last night it was crying that kept me awake. To-night I can't sleep for joy.

Philip called on us again to-day. He brought with him tickets for the performance of an Oratorio. Sacred music is not forbidden music among our people. Mrs. Staveley and Miss Staveley went to the concert with us. Philip and I sat next to each other.

My sister is a musician—I am nothing. That sounds bitter; but I don't mean it so. All I mean is, that I like simple little songs, which I can sing to myself by remembering the tune. There, my musical enjoyment ends. When voices and instruments burst out together by hundreds, I feel bewildered. I also get attacked by fidgets. This last misfortune is sure to overtake me when choruses are being performed. The unfortunate people employed are made to keep singing the same words, over and over and over again, till I find it a perfect misery to listen to them. The choruses were unendurable in the performance to-night. This is one of them: "Here we are all alone in the wilderness —alone in the wilderness—in the wilderness, alone, alone, alone—here we are in the wilderness—alone in the wilderness—all all alone in the wilderness,"

and so on, till I felt inclined to call for the learned person who writes Oratorios, and beg him to give the poor music a more generous allowance of words.

Whenever I looked at Philip, I found him looking at me. Perhaps he saw from the first that the music was wearying music to my ignorant ears. With his usual delicacy he said nothing for some time. But when he caught me yawning (though I did my best to hide it, for it looked like being ungrateful for the tickets), then he could restrain himself no longer. He whispered in my ear:

"You are getting tired of this. And so am I."

"I am trying to like it," I whispered back.

"Don't try," he answered. "Let's talk."

He meant, of course, talk in whispers. We were a good deal annoyed—especially when the characters were all alone in the wilderness—by bursts of singing and playing which interrupted us at the most interesting moments. Philip persevered with a manly firmness. What could I do but follow his example —at a distance?

He said: "Is it really true that your visit to Mrs. Staveley is coming to an end?"

I answered: "It comes to an end the day after to-morrow."

"Are you sorry to be leaving your friends in London?"

What I might have said if he had made that inquiry a day earlier, when I was the most miserable creature living, I would rather not try to guess. Being quite happy as things were, I could honestly tell him I was sorry.

"You can't possibly be as sorry as I am, Eunice. May I call you by your pretty name?"

"Yes, if you please."

"Eunice!"

"Yes."

"You will leave a blank in my life when you go away——"

There another chorus stopped him, just as I was eager for more. It was such a delightfully new sensation to hear a young gentleman telling me that I had left a blank in his life. The next change in the Oratorio brought up a young lady, singing alone. Some people behind us grumbled at the smallness of her voice. We thought her voice perfect. It seemed to lend itself so nicely to our whispers.

He said: "Will you help me to think of you while you are away? I want to imagine what your life is at home. Do you live in a town or in the country?"

I told him the name of our town. When we give a person information, I have always heard that we ought to make it complete. So I mentioned our address in the town. But I was troubled by a doubt. Perhaps he preferred the country. Being anxious about this, I said: "Would you rather have heard that I live in the country?"

"Live where you may, Eunice, the place will be a favourite place of mine. Besides, your town is famous. It has a public attraction which brings visitors to it."

I made another of those mistakes which no sensible girl, in my position, would have committed. I asked if he alluded to our new market-place.

He set me right in the sweetest manner: "I alluded to a building hundreds of years older than your market-place—your beautiful cathedral."

Fancy my not having thought of the cathedral! This is what comes of being a Congregationalist. If I had belonged to the Church of England, I should have forgotten the market-place, and remembered the cathedral. Not that I want to belong to the Church of England. Papa's chapel is good enough for me.

The song sung by the lady with the small voice was so pretty that the audience encored it. Didn't

Philip and I help them! With the sweetest smiles the lady sang it all over again. The people behind us left the concert.

He said: "Do you know, I take the greatest interest in cathedrals. I propose to enjoy the privilege and pleasure of seeing *your* cathedral early next week."

I had only to look at him to see that I was the cathedral. It was no surprise to hear next that he thought of "paying his respects to Mr. Gracedieu." He begged me to tell him what sort of reception he might hope to meet with when he called at our house. I got so excited in doing justice to Papa, that I quite forgot to whisper when the next question came. Philip wanted to know if Mr. Gracedieu disliked strangers. When I answered: "Oh dear, no!" I said it out loud, so that the people heard me. Cruel, cruel people! They all turned round and stared. One hideous old woman actually said, "Silence!" Miss Staveley looked disgusted. Even kind Mrs. Staveley lifted her eyebrows in astonishment.

Philip, dear Philip, protected and composed me.

He held my hand devotedly till the end of the performance. When he put us into the carriage, I was last. He whispered in my ear: "Expect me

next week." Miss Staveley might be as ill-natured as she pleased, on the way home. It didn't matter what she said. The Eunice of yesterday might have been mortified and offended. The Eunice of to-day was indifferent to the sharpest things that could be said to her.

* * * * *

All through yesterday's delightful evening, I never once thought of Philip's father. When I woke this morning, I remembered that old Mr. Dunboyne was a rich man. I could eat no breakfast for thinking of the poor girl who was not allowed to marry her young gentleman, because she had no money.

Mrs. Staveley waited to speak to me till the rest of them had left us together. I had expected her to notice that I looked dull and dismal. No! her cleverness got at my secret in quite another way.

She said: "How do you feel after the concert? You must be hard to please indeed if you were not satisfied with the accompaniments last night."

"The accompaniments of the Oratorio?"

"No, my dear. The accompaniments of Philip."

I suppose I ought to have laughed. In my miserable state of mind, it was not to be done. I

said: "I hope Mr. Dunboyne's father will not hear how kind he was to me."

Mrs. Staveley asked why.

My bitterness overflowed at my tongue. I said: "Because Papa is a poor man."

"And Philip's Papa is a rich man," says Mrs. Staveley, putting my own thought into words for me. "Where do you get these ideas, Eunice? Surely, you are not allowed to read novels?"

"Oh, no!"

"And you have certainly never seen a play?"

"Never."

"Clear your head, child, of the nonsense that has got into it—I can't think how. Rich Mr. Dunboyne has taught his heir to despise the base act of marrying for money. He knows that Philip will meet young ladies at my house; and he has written to me on the subject of his son's choice of a wife. 'Let Philip find good principles, good temper, and good looks; and I promise beforehand to find the money.' There is what he says. Are you satisfied with Philip's father, now?"

I jumped up in a state of ecstasy. Just as I had thrown my arms round Mrs. Staveley's neck, the servant came in with a letter, and handed it to me.

Helena had written again, on this last day of my visit. Her letter was full of instructions for buying things that she wants, before I leave London. I read on quietly enough until I came to the post-script. The effect of it on me may be told in two words: I screamed. Mrs. Staveley was naturally alarmed. "Bad news?" she asked. Being quite unable to offer an opinion, I read the postscript out loud, and left her to judge for herself.

This was Helena's news from home:

"I must prepare you for a surprise, before your return. You will find a strange lady established at home. Don't suppose there is any prospect of her bidding us good-bye, if we only wait long enough. She is already (with father's full approval) as much a member of the family as we are. You shall form your own unbiased opinion of her, Eunice. For the present, I say no more."

I asked Mrs. Staveley what she thought of my news from home. She said: "Your father approves of the lady, my dear. I suppose it's good news."

But Mrs. Staveley did not look as if she believed in the good news, for all that.

CHAPTER XIV.

HELENA'S DIARY.

To-day, I went as usual to the Scripture-class for girls. It was harder work than ever, teaching without Eunice to help me. Indeed, I felt lonely all day without my sister. When I got home, I rather hoped that some friend might have come to see us, and have been asked to stay to tea. The housemaid opened the door to me. I asked Maria if anybody had called.

"Yes, Miss; a lady, to see the master."

"A stranger?"

"Never saw her before, Miss, in all my life."

I put no more questions. Many ladies visit my father. They call it consulting the Minister. He advises them in their troubles, and guides them in their religious difficulties, and so on. They come and go in a sort of secrecy. So far as I know, they are mostly old maids, and they waste the Minister's time.

When my father came in to tea, I began to feel some curiosity about the lady who had called on

him. Visitors of that sort, in general, never appear to dwell on his mind after they have gone away; he sees too many of them, and is too well accustomed to what they have to say. On this particular evening, however, I perceived appearances that set me thinking; he looked worried and anxious.

"Has anything happened, father, to vex you?" I said.

"Yes."

"Is the lady concerned in it?"

"What lady, my dear?"

"The lady who called on you while I was out."

"Who told you she had called on me?"

"I asked Maria——"

"That will do, Helena, for the present."

He drank his tea and went back to his study, instead of staying awhile, and talking pleasantly as usual. My respect submitted to his want of confidence in me; but my curiosity was in a state of revolt. I sent for Maria, and proceeded to make my own discoveries, with this result:

No other person had called at the house. Nothing had happened, except the visit of the mysterious lady. "She looked between young and old. And, oh dear me, she was certainly not pretty. Not dressed nicely, to my mind; but they do say dress

is a matter of taste." Try as I might, I could get no more than that out of our stupid young housemaid.

Later in the evening, the cook had occasion to consult me about supper. This was a person possessing the advantages of age and experience. I asked if she had seen the lady. The cook's reply promised something new: "I can't say I saw the lady; but I heard her."

"Do you mean that you heard her speaking?"

"No, Miss—crying."

"Where was she crying?"

"In the master's study."

"How did you come to hear her?"

"Am I to understand, Miss, that you suspect me of listening?"

Is a lie told by a look as bad as a lie told by words? I looked shocked at the bare idea of suspecting a respectable person of listening. The cook's sense of honour was satisfied; she readily explained herself: "I was passing the door, Miss, on my way upstairs."

Here my discoveries came to an end. It was certainly possible that an afflicted member of my father's congregation might have called on him to be comforted. But he sees plenty of afflicted ladies,

without looking worried and anxious after they leave him. Still suspecting something out of the ordinary course of events, I waited hopefully for our next meeting at supper-time. Nothing came of it. My father left me by myself again, when the meal was over. He is always courteous to his daughters; and he made an apology: "Excuse me, Helena, I want to think."

I went to bed in a vile humour, and slept badly; wondering, in the long wakeful hours, what new rebuff I should meet with on the next day.

* * * * * *

At breakfast this morning I was agreeably surprised. No signs of anxiety showed themselves in my father's face. Instead of retiring to his study when we rose from the table, he proposed taking a turn in the garden: "You are looking pale, Helena, and you will be the better for a little fresh air. Besides, I have something to say to you."

Excitement, I am sure, is good for young women. I saw in his face, I heard in his last words, that the mystery of the lady was at last to be revealed. The sensation of languor and fatigue which follows a disturbed night, left me directly.

My father gave me his arm, and we walked slowly up and down the lawn.

"When that lady called on me yesterday," he began, "you wanted to know who she was, and you were surprised and disappointed when I refused to gratify your curiosity. My silence was not a selfish silence, Helena. I was thinking of you and your sister; and I was at a loss how to act for the best. You shall hear why my children were in my mind, presently. I must tell you first that I have arrived at a decision; I hope and believe on reasonable grounds. Ask me any questions you please; my silence will be no longer an obstacle in your way."

This was so very encouraging that I said at once: "I should like to know who the lady is."

"The lady is related to me," he answered. "We are cousins."

Here was a disclosure that I had not anticipated. In the little that I have seen of the world, I have observed that cousins—when they happen to be brought together under interesting circumstances—can remember their relationship, and forget their relationship, just as it suits them. "Is your cousin a married lady?" I ventured to inquire.

"No."

Short as it was, that reply might perhaps mean more than appeared on the surface. The cook had heard the lady crying. What sort of tender agita-

tion was answerable for those tears? Was it possible, barely possible, that Eunice and I might go to bed, one night, a widower's daughters, and wake up the next day to discover a stepmother?

"Have I or my sister ever seen the lady?" I asked.

"Never. She has been living abroad; and I have not seen her myself since we were both young people."

My excellent innocent father! Not the faintest idea of what I had been thinking of was in his mind. Little did he suspect how welcome was the relief that he had afforded to his daughter's wicked doubts of him. But he had not said a word yet about his cousin's personal appearance. There might be remains of good looks which the housemaid was too stupid to discover.

"After the long interval that has passed since you met," I said, "I suppose she has become an old woman?"

"No, my dear. Let us say, a middle-aged woman."

"Perhaps she is still an attractive person?"

He smiled. "I am afraid, Helena, that would never have been a very accurate description of her."

I now knew all that I wanted to know about this alarming person, excepting one last morsel of information which my father had strangely forgotten.

"We have been talking about the lady for some time," I said; "and you have not yet told me her name."

Father looked a little embarrassed. "It's not a very pretty name," he answered. "My cousin, my unfortunate cousin, is—Miss Jillgall."

I burst out with such a loud "Oh!" that he laughed. I caught the infection, and laughed louder still. Bless Miss Jillgall! The interview promised to become an easy one for both of us, thanks to her name. I was in good spirits, and I made no attempt to restrain them. "The next time Miss Jillgall honours you with a visit," I said, "you must give me an opportunity of being presented to her."

He made a strange reply: "You may find your opportunity, Helena, sooner than you anticipate."

Did this mean that she was going to call again in a day or two? I am afraid I spoke flippantly. I said: "Oh, father, another lady fascinated by the popular preacher?"

The garden chairs were near us. He signed to

me gravely to be seated by his side, and said to himself: "This is my fault."

"What is your fault?" I asked.

"I have left you in ignorance, my dear, of my cousin's sad story. It is soon told; and, if it checks your merriment, it will make amends by deserving your sympathy. I was indebted to her father, when I was a boy, for acts of kindness which I can never forget. He was twice married. The death of his first wife left him with one child—once my playfellow; now the lady whose visit has excited your curiosity. His second wife was a Belgian. She persuaded him to sell his business in London, and to invest the money in a partnership with a brother of hers, established as sugar-refiner at Antwerp. The little daughter accompanied her father to Belgium. Are you attending to me, Helena?"

I was waiting for the interesting part of the story, and was wondering when he would get to it.

"As time went on," he resumed, "the new partner found that the value of the business at Antwerp had been greatly overrated. After a long struggle with adverse circumstances, he decided on withdrawing from the partnership before the whole of his capital was lost in a failing commercial speculation. The end of it was that he retired, with his daughter,

to a small town in East Flanders; the wreck of his property having left him with an income of no more than two hundred pounds a year."

I showed my father that I was attending to him now, by inquiring what had become of the Belgian wife. Those nervous quiverings, which Eunice has mentioned in her diary, began to appear in his face.

"It is too shameful a story," he said, "to be told to a young girl. The marriage was dissolved by law, and the wife was the person to blame. I am sure, Helena, you don't wish to hear any more of *this* part of the story."

I did wish. But I saw that he expected me to say No—so I said it.

"The father and daughter," he went on, "never so much as thought of returning to their own country. They were too poor to live comfortably in England. In Belgium their income was sufficient for their wants. On the father's death, the daughter remained in the town. She had friends there, and friends nowhere else; and she might have lived abroad to the end of her days, but for a calamity to which we are all liable. A long and serious illness completely prostrated her. Skilled medical attendance, costing large sums of money for the doctors'

travelling expenses, was imperatively required. Experienced nurses, summoned from a distant hospital, were in attendance night and day. Luxuries, far beyond the reach of her little income, were absolutely required to support her wasted strength at the time of her tedious recovery. In one word, her resources were sadly diminished, when the poor creature had paid her debts, and had regained her hold on life. At that time, she unhappily met with the man who has ruined her."

It was getting interesting at last. "Ruined her?" I repeated. "Do you mean that he robbed her?"

"That, Helena, is exactly what I mean—and many and many a helpless woman has been robbed in the same way. The man of whom I am now speaking was a lawyer in large practice. He bore an excellent character, and was highly respected for his exemplary life. My cousin (not at all a discreet person, I am bound to admit) was induced to consult him on her pecuniary affairs. He expressed the most generous sympathy—offered to employ her little capital in his business—and pledged himself to pay her double the interest for her money, which she had been in the habit of receiving from the sound investment chosen by her father."

"And of course he got the money, and never paid the interest?" Eager to hear the end, I interrupted the story in those inconsiderate words. My father's answer quietly reproved me.

"He paid the interest regularly as long as he lived."

"And what happened when he died?"

"He died a bankrupt; the secret profligacy of his life was at last exposed. Nothing, actually nothing, was left for his creditors. The unfortunate creature, whose ugly name has amused you, must get help somewhere, or must go to the workhouse."

If I had been in a state of mind to attend to trifles, this would have explained the reason why the cook had heard Miss Jillgall crying. But the prospect before me—the unendurable prospect of having a strange woman in the house—had showed itself too plainly to be mistaken. I could think of nothing else. With infinite difficulty I assumed a momentary appearance of composure, and suggested that Miss Jillgall's foreign friends might have done something to help her.

My father defended her foreign friends. "My dear, they were poor people, and did all they could afford to do. But for their kindness, my cousin might not have been able to return to England."

"And to cast herself on your mercy," I added, "in the character of a helpless woman."

"No, Helena! Not to cast herself on my mercy —but to find my house open to her, as her father's house was open to me in the bygone time. I am her only surviving relative; and, while I live, she shall not be a helpless woman."

I began to wish that I had not spoken out so plainly. My father's sweet temper—I do so sincerely wish I had inherited it!—made the kindest allowances for me.

"I understand the momentary bitterness of feeling that has escaped you," he said; "I may almost say that I expected it. My only hesitation in this matter has been caused by my sense of what I owe to my children. It was putting your endurance, and your sister's endurance, to a trial to expect you to receive a stranger (and that stranger not a young girl like yourselves) as one of the household, living with you in the closest intimacy of family life. The consideration which has decided me does justice, I hope, to you and Eunice, as well as to myself. I think that some allowance is due from my daughters to the father who has always made loving allowance for *them*. Am I wrong in believing that my good children have not forgotten this, and have only

waited for the occasion to feel the pleasure of rewarding me?"

It was beautifully put. There was but one thing to be done—I kissed him. And there was but one thing to be said. I asked at what time we might expect to receive Miss Jillgall.

"She is staying, Helena, at a small hotel in the town. I have already sent to say that we are waiting to see her. Perhaps you will look at the spare bedroom?"

"It shall be got ready, father, directly."

I ran into the house; I rushed upstairs into the room that is Eunice's and mine; I locked the door, and then I gave way to my rage, before it stifled me. I stamped on the floor, I clenched my fists, I cast myself on the bed, I reviled that hateful woman by every hard word that I could throw at her. Oh, the luxury of it! the luxury of it!

Cold water and my hairbrush soon made me fit to be seen again.

As for the spare room, it looked a great deal too comfortable for an incubus from foreign parts. The one improvement that I could have made, if a friend of mine had been expected, was suggested by the window-curtains. I was looking at a torn place in one of them, and determining to leave it unre-

paired, when I felt an arm slipped round my waist from behind. A voice, so close that it tickled my neck, said: "Dear girl, what friends we shall be!" I turned round, and confronted Miss Jillgall.

CHAPTER XV.

HELENA'S DIARY.

If I am not a good girl, where is a good girl to be found? This is in Eunice's style. It sometimes amuses me to mimic my simple sister.

I have just torn three pages out of my diary, in deference to the expression of my father's wishes. He took the first opportunity which his cousin permitted him to enjoy of speaking to me privately; and his object was to caution me against hastily relying on first impressions of anybody—especially of Miss Jillgall. "Wait for a day or two," he said; "and then form your estimate of the new member of our household."

The stormy state of my temper had passed away, and had left my atmosphere calm again. I could feel that I had received good advice; but unluckily it reached me too late.

I had formed my estimate of Miss Jillgall, and

had put it in writing for my own satisfaction, at least an hour before my father found himself at liberty to speak to me. I don't agree with him in distrusting first impressions; and I had proposed to put my opinion to the test, by referring to what I had written about his cousin at a later time. However, after what he had said to me, I felt bound in filial duty to take the pages out of my book, and to let two days pass before I presumed to enjoy the luxury of hating Miss Jillgall.

On one thing I am determined: Eunice shall not form a hasty opinion, either. She shall undergo the same severe discipline of self-restraint to which her sister is obliged to submit. Let us be just, as somebody says, before we are generous. No more for to-day.

* * * * *

I open my diary again—after the prescribed interval has elapsed. The first impression produced on me by the new member of our household remains entirely unchanged.

Have I already made the remark that, when one removes a page from a book, it does not necessarily follow that one destroys the page afterwards? or did I leave this to be inferred? In either case, my course of proceeding was the same. I ordered some paste

to be made. Then I unlocked a drawer, and found my poor ill-used leaves, and put them back in my Journal. An act of justice is surely not the less praiseworthy because it is an act of justice done to one's self.

My father has often told me that he revises his writings on religious subjects. I may harmlessly imitate that good example, by revising my restored entry. It is now a sufficiently remarkable performance to be distinguished by a title. Let me call it:

Impressions of Miss Jillgall.

My first impression was a strong one—it was produced by the state of this lady's breath. In other words, I was obliged to let her kiss me. It is a duty to be considerate towards human infirmity. I will only say that I thought I should have fainted.

My second impression draws a portrait, and produces a striking likeness.

Figure, little and lean—hair of the dirty drab colour which we see in string—small light gray eyes, sly and restless, and deeply sunk in the head—prominent cheek-bones, and a florid complexion—an inquisitive nose, turning up at the end—a large mouth and a servile smile—raw-looking hands, decorated with black mittens—a misfitting white jacket

and a limp skirt—manners familiar—temper cleverly hidden—voice too irritating to be mentioned. Whose portrait is this? It is the photograph of Miss Jillgall, taken in words.

Her true character is not easy to discover; I suspect that it will only show itself little by little. That she is a born meddler in other people's affairs, I think I can see already. I also found out that she trusted to flattery as the easiest means of making herself agreeable. She tried her first experiment on myself.

"You charming girl," she began, "your bright face encourages me to ask a favour. Pray make me useful! The one aspiration of my life is to be useful. Unless you employ me in that way, I have no right to intrude myself into your family circle. Yes, yes, I know that your father has opened his house and his heart to me. But I dare not found any claim —your name is Helena, isn't it? Dear Helena, I dare not found any claim on what I owe to your father's kindness."

"Why not?" I inquired.

"Because your father is not a man——"

I was rude enough to interrupt her: "What is he then?"

"An angel," Miss Jillgall answered solemnly. "A

destitute earthly creature like me must not look up as high as your father. I might be dazzled."

This was rather more than I could endure patiently. "Let us try," I suggested, "if we can't understand each other, at starting."

Miss Jillgall's little eyes twinkled in their bony caverns. "The very thing I was going to propose!" she burst out.

"Very well," I went on; "then, let me tell you plainly that flattery is not relished in this house."

"Flattery?" She put her hand to her head as she repeated the word, and looked quite bewildered. "Dear Helena, I have lived all my life in East Flanders, and my own language is occasionally strange to me. Can you tell me what flattery is in Flemish?"

"I don't understand Flemish."

"How very provoking! You don't understand Flemish, and I don't understand Flattery. I should so like to know what it means. Ah, I see books in this lovely room. Is there a dictionary among them?" She darted to the bookcase, and discovered a dictionary. "Now I shall understand Flattery," she remarked—"and then we shall understand each other. Oh, let me find it for myself!" She ran her raw red finger along the alphabetical headings at the top

of each page. "'F.A.D.' That won't do. 'F.I.E.' Farther on still. 'F.L.E.' Too far the other way. 'F.L.A.' Here we are! 'Flattery: False praise. Commendation bestowed for the purpose of gaining favour and influence.' Oh, Helena, how cruel of you!" She dropped the book, and sank into a chair—the picture, if such a thing can be, of a broken-hearted old maid.

I should most assuredly have taken the opportunity of leaving her to her own devices, if I had been free to act as I pleased. But my interests as a daughter forbade me to make an enemy of my father's cousin, on the first day when she had entered the house. I made an apology, very neatly expressed.

She jumped up—let me do her justice; Miss Jillgall is as nimble as a monkey—and (Faugh!) she kissed me for the second time. If I had been a man, I am afraid I should have called for that deadly poison (we are all temperance people in this house) known by the name of Brandy.

"If you will make me love you," Miss Jillgall explained, "you must expect to be kissed. Dear girl, let us go back to my poor little petition. Oh, do make me useful! There are so many things I can do: you will find me a treasure in the house. I write a good hand; I understand polishing furniture;

I can dress hair (look at my own hair); I play and sing a little when people want to be amused; I can mix a salad and knit stockings—who is this?" The cook came in, at the moment, to consult me; I introduced her. "And, oh," cried Miss Jillgall in ecstasy, "I can cook! Do please let me see the kitchen."

The cook's face turned red. She had come to me to make a confession; and she had not (as she afterwards said) bargained for the presence of a stranger. For the first time in her life she took the liberty of whispering to me: "I must ask you, Miss, to let me send up the cauliflower plain boiled; I don't understand the directions in the book for doing it in the foreign way."

Miss Jillgall's ears—perhaps because they are so large—possess a quickness of hearing, quite unparalleled in my experience. Not one word of the cook's whispered confession had escaped her.

"Here," she declared, "is an opportunity of making myself useful! What is the cook's name? Hannah? Take me downstairs, Hannah, and I'll show you how to do the cauliflower in the foreign way. She seems to hesitate. Is it possible that she doesn't believe me? Listen, Hannah, and judge for yourself if I am deceiving you. Have you boiled

the cauliflower? Very well; this is what you must do next. Take four ounces of grated cheese, two ounces of best butter, the yolks of four eggs, a little bit of glaze, lemon-juice, nutmeg—dear, dear, how black she looks! What have I said to offend her?"

The cook passed over the lady who had presumed to instruct her, as if no such person had been present, and addressed herself to me: "If I am to be interfered with in my own kitchen, Miss, I will ask you to suit yourself at a month's notice."

Miss Jillgall wrung her hands in despair.

"I meant so kindly," she said; "and I seem to have made mischief. With the best intentions, Helena, I have set you and your servant at variance. I really didn't know you had such a temper, Hannah," she declared, following the cook to the door. "I'm sure there's nothing I am not ready to do to make it up with you. Perhaps, you have not got the cheese downstairs? I'm ready to go out and buy it for you. I could show you how to keep eggs sweet and fresh for weeks together. Your gown doesn't fit very well; I shall be glad to improve it, if you will leave it out for me after you have gone to bed. There!" cried Miss Jillgall, as the cook majestically left the room, without even looking at her, "I have done my best to make it up, and you

see how my advances are received. What more could I have done? I really ask you, dear, as a friend, what more *could* I have done?"

I had it on the tip of my tongue to say: "The cook doesn't ask you to buy cheese for her, or to teach her how to keep eggs, or to improve the fit of her gown; all she wants is to have her kitchen to herself." But here again it was necessary to remember that this odious person was my father's guest.

"Pray don't distress yourself," I began; "I am sure you are not to blame, Miss Jillgall——"

"Oh, don't!"

"Don't—what?"

"Don't call me Miss Jillgall. I call you Helena. Call me Selina."

I had really not supposed it possible that she could be more unendurable than ever. When she mentioned her Christian name, she succeeded nevertheless in producing that result. In the whole list of women's names, is there any one to be found so absolutely sickening as "Selina?" I forced myself to pronounce it; I made another neatly-expressed apology; I said English servants were so very peculiar. Selina was more than satisfied; she was quite delighted.

"Is that it, indeed? An explanation was all I wanted. How good of you! And now tell me—is there no chance, in the house or out of the house, of my making myself useful? Oh, what's that? Do I see a chance? I do! I do!"

Miss Jillgall's eyes are more than mortal. At one time, they are microscopes. At another time, they are telescopes. She discovered (right across the room) the torn place in the window-curtain. In an instant, she snatched a dirty little leather case out of her pocket, threaded her needle, and began darning the curtain. She sang over her work. "My heart is light, my will is free——" I can repeat no more of it. When I heard her singing voice, I became reckless of consequences, and ran out of the room with my hands over my ears.

CHAPTER XVI.

HELENA'S DIARY.

When I reached the foot of the stairs, my father called me into his study.

I found him at his writing-table, with such a heap of torn-up paper in his waste-basket that it overflowed on to the floor. He explained to me

that he had been destroying a large accumulation of old letters, and had ended (when his employment began to grow wearisome) in examining his correspondence rather carelessly. The result was that he had torn up a letter, and a copy of the reply, which ought to have been set aside as worthy of preservation. After collecting the fragments, he had heaped them on the table. If I could contrive to put them together again on fair sheets of paper, and fasten them in their right places with gum, I should be doing him a service, at a time when he was too busy to set his mistake right for himself.

Here was the best excuse that I could desire for keeping out of Miss Jillgall's way. I cheerfully set to work on the restoration of the letters, while my father went on with his writing.

Having put the fragments together—excepting a few gaps caused by morsels that had been lost—I was unwilling to fasten them down with gum, until I could feel sure of not having made any mistakes; especially in regard to some of the lost words which I had been obliged to restore by guess-work. So I copied the letters, and submitted them, in the first place, to my father's approval.

He praised me in the prettiest manner for the care that I had taken. But, when he began, after

some hesitation, to read my copy, I noticed a change. The smile left his face, and the nervous quiverings showed themselves again.

"Quite right, my child," he said, in low sad tones.

On returning to my side of the table, I expected to see him resume his writing. He crossed the room to the window, and stood (with his back to me) looking out.

When I had first discovered the sense of the letters, they failed to interest me. A tiresome woman, presuming on the kindness of a good-natured man to beg a favour which she had no right to ask, and receiving a refusal which she had richly deserved, was no remarkable event in my experience as my father's secretary and copyist. But the change in his face, while he read the correspondence, altered my opinion of the letters. There was more in them evidently than I had discovered. I kept my manuscript copy—here it is:

"From Miss Elizabeth Chance to the Rev. Abel Gracedieu.

(Date of year, 1859. Date of month, missing.)

"DEAR SIR,

"You have, I hope, not quite forgotten the interesting conversation that we had last year in the

governor's rooms. I am afraid I spoke a little flippantly at the time; but I am sure you will believe me when I say that this was out of no want of respect to yourself. My pecuniary position being far from prosperous, I am endeavouring to obtain the vacant situation of housekeeper in a public institution, the prospectus of which I enclose. You will see it is a rule of the place that a candidate must be a single woman (which I am), and must be recommended by a clergyman. You are the only reverend gentleman whom it is my good fortune to know, and the thing is of course a mere formality. Pray excuse this application, and oblige me by acting as my reference.

"Sincerely yours,

"ELIZABETH CHANCE.

"P.S.—Please address: Miss E. Chance, Poste Restante, St. Martin's-le-Grand, London."

"*From the Rev. Abel Gracedieu to Miss Chance.*

(Copy.)

"MADAM,

"The brief conversation to which your letter alludes, took place at an accidental meeting between us. I then saw you for the first time, and I have not seen you since. It is impossible for me to assert

the claim of a perfect stranger, like yourself, to fill a situation of trust. I must beg to decline acting as your reference.

"Your obedient servant,

"ABEL GRACEDIEU."

* * * * *

My father was still at the window.

In that idle position he could hardly complain of me for interrupting him, if I ventured to talk about the letters which I had put together. If my curiosity displeased him, he had only to say so, and there would be an end to any allusions of mine to the subject. My first idea was to join him at the window. On reflection, and still perceiving that he kept his back turned on me, I thought it might be more prudent to remain at the table.

"This Miss Chance seems to be an impudent person?" I said.

"Yes."

"Was she a young woman, when you met with her?"

"Yes."

"What sort of a woman to look at? Ugly?"

"No."

Here were three answers which Eunice herself would have been quick enough to interpret as three

warnings to say no more. I felt a little hurt by his keeping his back turned on me. At the same time, and naturally I think, I found my interest in Miss Chance (I don't say my friendly interest) considerably increased by my father's unusually rude behaviour. I was also animated by an irresistible desire to make him turn round and look at me.

"Miss Chance's letter was written many years ago," I resumed. "I wonder what has become of her since she wrote to you."

"I know nothing about her."

"Not even whether she is alive or dead?"

"Not even that. What do these questions mean, Helena?"

"Nothing, father."

I declare he looked as if he suspected me!

"Why don't you speak out?" he said. "Have I ever taught you to conceal your thoughts? Have I ever been a hard father, who discouraged you when you wished to confide in him? What are you thinking about? Do *you* know anything of this woman?"

"Oh, father, what a question! I never even heard of her till I put the torn letters together. I begin to wish you had not asked me to do it."

"So do I. It never struck me that you would

feel such extraordinary—I had almost said, such vulgar—curiosity about a worthless letter."

This roused my temper. When a young lady is told that she is vulgar, if she has any self-conceit—I mean self-respect—she feels insulted. I said something sharp in my turn. It was in the way of argument. I do not know how it may be with other young persons, I never reason so well myself as when I am angry.

"You call it a worthless letter," I said, "and yet you think it worth preserving."

"Have you nothing more to say to me than that?" he asked.

"Nothing more," I answered.

He changed again. After having looked unaccountably angry, he now looked unaccountably relieved.

"I will soon satisfy you," he said, "that I have a good reason for preserving a worthless letter. Miss Chance, my dear, is not a woman to be trusted. If she saw her advantage in making a bad use of my reply, I am afraid she would not hesitate to do it. Even if she is no longer living, I don't know into what vile hands my letter may not have fallen, or how it might be falsified for some wicked purpose. Do you see now how a correspondence ma become

accidentally important, though it is of no value in itself?"

I could say "Yes" to this with a safe conscience.

But there were some perplexities still left in my mind. It seemed strange that Miss Chance should (apparently) have submitted to the severity of my father's reply. "I should have thought," I said to him, "that she would have sent you another impudent letter—or perhaps have insisted on seeing you, and using her tongue instead of her pen."

"She could do neither the one nor the other, Helena. Miss Chance will never find out my address again; I have taken good care of that."

He spoke in a loud voice, with a flushed face—as if it was quite a triumph to have prevented this woman from discovering his address. What reason could he have for being so anxious to keep her away from him? Could I venture to conclude that there was a mystery in the life of a man so blameless, so truly pious? It shocked one even to think of it.

There was a silence between us, to which the housemaid offered a welcome interruption. Dinner was ready.

He kissed me before we left the room. "One word more, Helena," he said, "and I have done.

Let there be no more talk between us about Elizabeth Chance."

CHAPTER XVII.

HELENA'S DIARY.

MISS JILLGALL joined us at the dinner-table, in a state of excitement, carrying a book in her hand.

I am inclined, on reflection, to suspect that she is quite clever enough to have discovered that I hate her—and that many of the aggravating things she says and does are assumed, out of retaliation, for the purpose of making me angry. That ugly face is a double face, or I am much mistaken.

To return to the dinner-table, Miss Jillgall addressed herself, with an air of playful penitence, to my father.

"Dear cousin, I hope I have not done wrong. Helena left me all by myself. When I had finished darning the curtain, I really didn't know what to do. So I opened all the bed-room doors upstairs and looked into the rooms. In the big room with two beds—oh, I am so ashamed—I found this book. Please look at the first page."

My father looked at the title-page:—"Doctor

Watts's Hymns. Well, Selina, what is there to be ashamed of in this?"

"Oh, no! no! It's the wrong page. Do look at the other page—the one that comes first before that one."

My patient father turned to the blank page.

"Ah," he said quietly, "my other daughter's name is written in it—the daughter whom you have not yet seen. Well?"

Miss Jillgall clasped her hands distractedly. "It's my ignorance I'm so ashamed of. Dear cousin, forgive me, enlighten me. I don't know how to pronounce your other daughter's name. Do you call her Euneece?"

The dinner was getting cold. I was provoked into saying: "No, we don't."

She had evidently not forgiven me for leaving her by herself. "Pardon me, Helena, when I want information I don't apply to you; I sit, as it were, at the feet of your learned father. Dear cousin, is it——"

Even my father declined to wait for his dinner any longer. "Pronounce it as you like, Selina. Here we say Eunice—with the accent on the 'i' and with the final 'e' sounded: Eu-ni-see. Let me give you some soup."

Miss Jillgall groaned. "Oh, how difficult it seems to be! Quite beyond my poor brains! I shall ask the dear girl's leave to call her Euneece. What very strong soup! Isn't it rather a waste of meat? Give me a little more, please."

I discovered another of Miss Jillgall's peculiarities. Her appetite was enormous, and her ways were greedy. You heard her eat her soup. She devoured the food on her plate with her eyes before she put it into her mouth; and she criticised our English cookery in the most impudent manner, under pretence of asking humbly how it was done. There was, however, some temporary compensation for this. We had less of her talk while she was eating her dinner.

With the removal of the cloth, she recovered the use of her tongue; and she hit on the one subject of all others which proves to be the sorest trial to my father's patience.

"And now, dear cousin, let us talk of your other daughter, our absent Euneece. I do so long to see her. When is she coming back?"

"In a few days more."

"How glad I am! And, do tell me—which is she? Your oldest girl or your youngest?"

"Neither the one nor the other, Selina."

"Oh, my head! my head! This is even worse than the accent on the 'i' and the final 'e.' Stop! I am cleverer than I thought I was. You mean that the girls are twins. Are they both so exactly like each other that I shan't know which is which? What fun!"

When the subject of our ages was unluckily started at Mrs. Staveley's, I had slipped out of the difficulty easily by assuming the character of the eldest sister—an example of ready tact which my dear stupid Eunice doesn't understand. In my father's presence, it is needless to say that I kept silence, and left it to him. I was sorry to be obliged to do this. Owing to his sad state of health, he is easily irritated—especially by inquisitive strangers.

"I must leave you," he answered, without taking the slightest notice of what Miss Jillgall had said to him. "My work is waiting for me."

She stopped him on his way to the door. "Oh, tell me—can't I help you?"

"Thank you; no."

"Well—but tell me one thing. Am I right about the twins?"

"You are wrong."

Miss Jillgall's demonstrative hands flew up into

the air again, and expressed the climax of astonishment by quivering over her head. "This is positively maddening," she declared. "What does it mean?"

"Take my advice, cousin. Don't attempt to find out what it means."

He left the room. Miss Jillgall appealed to me. I imitated my father's wise brevity of expression: "Sorry to disappoint you, Selina; I know no more about it than you do. Come upstairs."

Every step of the way up to the drawing-room was marked by a protest or an inquiry. Did I expect her to believe that I couldn't say which of us was the elder of the two? that I didn't really know what my father's motive was for this extraordinary mystification? that my sister and I had submitted to be robbed, as it were, of our own ages, and had not insisted on discovering which of us had come into the world first? that our friends had not put an end to this sort of thing by comparing us personally, and discovering which was the elder sister by investigation of our faces? To all this I replied: First, that I did certainly expect her to believe whatever I might say: Secondly, that what she was pleased to call the "mystification" had begun when we were both children; that habit had made it

familiar to us in the course of years; and, above all, that we were too fond of our good father to ask for explanations which we knew by experience would distress him: Thirdly, that friends did try to discover, by personal examination, which was the elder sister, and differed perpetually in their conclusions; also that we had amused ourselves by trying the same experiment before our looking-glasses, and that Eunice thought Helena was the oldest, and Helena thought Eunice was the oldest: Fourthly (and finally), that the Reverend Mr. Gracedieu's cousin had better drop the subject, unless she was bent on making her presence in the house unendurable to the Reverend Mr. Gracedieu himself.

I write it with a sense of humiliation; Miss Jillgall listened attentively to all I had to say—and then took me completely by surprise. This inquisitive, meddlesome, restless, impudent woman suddenly transformed herself into a perfect model of amiability and decorum. She actually said she agreed with me, and was much obliged for my good advice!

A stupid young woman, in my place, would have discovered that this was not natural, and that Miss Jillgall was presenting herself to me in disguise, to reach some secret end of her own. I am not a stupid young woman; I ought to have had at my

service penetration enough to see through and through cousin Selina. Well! cousin Selina was an impenetrable mystery to me.

The one thing to be done was to watch her. I was at least sly enough to take up a book, and pretend to be reading it. How contemptible!

She looked round the room, and discovered our pretty writing-table: a present to my father from his congregation. After a little consideration, she sat down to write a letter.

"When does the post go out?" she asked.

I mentioned the hour; and she began her letter. Before she could have written more than the first two or three lines, she turned round on her seat, and began talking to me.

"Do you like writing letters, my dear?"

"Yes—but then I have not many letters to write."

"Only a few friends, Helen, but those few worthy to be loved? My own case exactly. Has your father told you of my troubles? Ah, I am glad of that. It spares me the sad necessity of confessing what I have suffered. Oh, how good my friends, my few friends, were to me in that dull little Belgian town! One of them was generosity personified—ah, she had suffered, too! A vile husband who had deceived

and deserted her. Oh, the men! When she heard of the loss of my little fortune, that noble creature got up a subscription for me, and went round herself to collect. Think of what I owe to her! Ought I to let another day pass without writing to my benefactress? Am I not bound in gratitude to make her happy in the knowledge of *my* happiness—I mean the refuge opened to me in this hospitable house?"

She twisted herself back again to the writing-table, and went on with her letter.

I have not attempted to conceal my stupidity. Let me now record a partial recovery of my intelligence.

It was not to be denied that Miss Jillgall had discovered a good reason for writing to her friend; but I was at a loss to understand why she should have been so anxious to mention the reason. Was it possible—after the talk which had passed between us—that she had something mischievous to say in her letter, relating to my father or to me? Was she afraid I might suspect this? And had she been so communicative for the purpose of leading my suspicions astray? These were vague guesses; but, try as I might, I could arrive at no clearer view of what was passing in Miss Jillgall's mind. What

would I not have given to be able to look over her shoulder, without discovery!

She finished her letter, and put the address, and closed the envelope. Then she turned round towards me again.

"Have you got a foreign postage-stamp, dear?"

If I could look at nothing else, I was resolved to look at her envelope. It was only necessary to go to the study, and to apply to my father. I returned with the foreign stamp, and I stuck it on the envelope with my own hand.

There was nothing to interest *me* in the address, as I ought to have foreseen, if I had not been too much excited for the exercise of a little common sense. Miss Jillgall's wonderful friend was only remarkable by her ugly foreign name — MRS. TENBRUGGEN.

CHAPTER XVIII.

EUNICE'S DIARY.

HERE I am, writing my history of myself, once more, by my own bedside. Some unexpected events have happened while I have been away. One of them is the absence of my sister.

Helena has left home on a visit to a northern town by the seaside. She is staying in the house of a minister (one of Papa's friends), and is occupying a position of dignity in which I should certainly lose my head. The minister and his wife and daughters propose to set up a Girls' Scripture Class, on the plan devised by Papa; and they are at a loss, poor helpless people, to know how to begin. Helena has volunteered to set the thing going. And there she is now, advising everybody, governing everybody, encouraging everybody—issuing directions, finding fault, rewarding merit—oh, dear, let me put it all in one word, and say: thoroughly enjoying herself.

Another event has happened, relating to Papa. It so distressed me that I even forgot to think of Philip—for a little while.

Travelling by railway (I suppose because I am not used to it) gives me the headache. When I got to our station here, I thought it would do me more good to walk home than to ride in the noisy omnibus. Half way between the railway and the town, I met one of the doctors. He is a member of our congregation; and he it was who recommended Papa, some time since, to give up his work as a minister and take a long holiday in foreign parts.

"I am glad to have met with you," the doctor

said. "Your sister, I find, is away on a visit; and I want to speak to one of you about your father."

It seemed that he had been observing Papa, in chapel, from what he called his own medical point of view. He did not conceal from me that he had drawn conclusions which made him feel uneasy. "It may be anxiety," he said, "or it may be overwork. In either case, your father is in a state of nervous derangement, which is likely to lead to serious results—unless he takes the advice that I gave him when he last consulted me. There must be no more hesitation about it. Be careful not to irritate him—but remember that he *must* rest. You and your sister have some influence over him; he won't listen to me."

Poor dear Papa! I did see a change in him for the worse—though I had only been away for so short a time.

When I put my arms round his neck, and kissed him, he turned pale, and then flushed up suddenly: the tears came into his eyes. Oh, it was hard to follow the doctor's advice, and not to cry too; but I succeeded in controlling myself. I sat on his knee, and made him tell me all that I have written here about Helena. This led to our talking next of the new lady, who is to live with us as a member of

the family. I began to feel less uneasy at the prospect of being introduced to this stranger, when I heard that she was Papa's cousin. And when he mentioned her name, and saw how it amused me, his poor worn face brightened into a smile. "Go and find her," he said, "and introduce yourself. I want to hear, Eunice, if you and my cousin are likely to get on well together."

The servants told me that Miss Jillgall was in the garden.

I searched here, there, and everywhere, and failed to find her. The place was so quiet, it looked so deliciously pure and bright, after smoky dreary London, that I sat down at the further end of the garden, and let my mind take me back to Philip. What was he doing at that moment, while I was thinking of him? Perhaps he was in the company of other young ladies, who drew all his thoughts away to themselves? Or perhaps he was writing to his father in Ireland, and saying something kindly and prettily about me? Or perhaps he was looking forward, as anxiously as I do, to our meeting next week.

I have had my plans, and I have changed my plans.

On the railway journey, I thought I would tell

Papa at once of the new happiness which seems to have put a new life into me. It would have been delightful to make my confession to that first and best and dearest of friends; but my meeting with the doctor spoilt it all. After what he had said to me, I discovered a risk. If I ventured to tell Papa that my heart was set on a young gentleman who was a stranger to him, could I be sure that he would receive my confession favourably? There was a chance that it might irritate him—and the fault would then be mine of doing what I had been warned to avoid. It might be safer in every way, to wait till Philip paid his visit, and he and Papa had been introduced to each other and charmed with each other. Could Helena herself have arrived at a wiser conclusion? I declare I felt proud of my own discretion.

In this enjoyable frame of mind, I was disturbed by a woman's voice. The tone was a tone of distress, and the words reached my ears from the end of the garden: "Please, Miss, let me in."

A shrubbery marks the limit of our little bit of pleasure-ground. On the other side of it, there is a cottage standing on the edge of the common. The most good-natured woman in the world lives here. She is our laundress—married to a stupid young

fellow named Molly, and blest with a plump baby as sweet-tempered as herself. Thinking it likely that the piteous voice which had disturbed me might be the voice of Mrs. Molly, I was astonished to hear her appealing to anybody (perhaps to me?) to "let her in." So I passed through the shrubbery, wondering whether the gate had been locked during my absence in London. No; it was as easy to open as ever.

The cottage door was not closed.

I saw our amiable laundress in the passage on her knees, trying to open an inner door which seemed to be locked. She had her eye at the keyhole; and, once again, she called out: "Please, Miss, let me in." I waited to see if the door would be opened—nothing happened. I waited again, to hear if some person inside would answer—nobody spoke. But somebody, or something, made a sound of splashing water on the other side of the door.

I showed myself, and asked what was the matter.

Mrs. Molly looked at me helplessly. She said: "Miss Eunice, it's the baby."

"What has the baby done?" I inquired.

Mrs. Molly got on her feet, and whispered in my ear: "You know he's a fine child?"

"Yes."

"Well, Miss, he's bewitched a lady."

"What lady?"

"Miss Jillgall."

The very person I had been trying to find! I asked where she was.

The laundress pointed dolefully to the locked door: "In there."

"And where is your baby?"

The poor woman still pointed to the door: "I'm beginning to doubt, Miss, whether it *is* my baby."

"Nonsense, Mrs. Molly. If it isn't yours, whose baby can it be."

"Miss Jillgall's."

Her puzzled face made this singular reply more funny still. The splashing of water on the other side of the door began again. "What is Miss Jillgall doing now?" I said.

"Washing the baby, Miss. A week ago, she came in here, one morning; very pleasant and kind, I must own. She found me putting on the baby's things. She says, 'What a cherub!' which I took as a compliment. She says: 'I shall call again to-morrow.' She called again so early that she found the baby in his crib. 'You be a good soul,' she

says, 'and go about your work, and leave the child to me.' I says: 'Yes, Miss, but please to wait till I've made him fit to be seen.' She says: 'That's just what I mean to do myself.' I stared; and I think any other person would have done the same in my place. 'If there's one thing more than another I enjoy,' she says, 'it's making myself useful. Mrs. Molly, I've taken a fancy to your boy-baby,' she says, 'and I mean to make myself useful to *him*.' If you will believe it, Miss Jillgall has only let me have one opportunity of putting my own child tidy. She was late this morning, and I got my chance, and had the boy on my lap, drying him—when in she burst like a blast of wind, and snatched the baby away from me. 'This is your nasty temper,' she says; 'I declare I'm ashamed of you!' And there she is, with the door locked against me, washing the child all over again herself. Twice I've knocked, and asked her to let me in, and can't even get an answer. They do say there's luck in odd numbers; suppose I try again?" Mrs. Molly knocked, and the proverb proved to be true; she got an answer from Miss Jillgall at last: "If you don't be quiet and go away, you shan't have the baby back at all." Who could help it?—I burst out laughing. Miss Jillgall (as I supposed from the tone of her

voice) took severe notice of this act of impropriety. "Who's that laughing?" she called out; "give yourself a name." I gave my name. The door was instantly thrown open with a bang. Papa's cousin appeared, in a dishevelled state, with splashes of soap and water all over her. She held the child in one arm, and she threw the other arm round my neck. "Dearest Euneece, I have been longing to see you. How do you like Our baby?"

To the curious story of my introduction to Miss Jillgall, I ought perhaps to add that I have got to be friends with her already. I am the friend of anybody who amuses me. What will Helena say when she reads this?

CHAPTER XIX.

EUNICE'S DIARY.

When people are interested in some event that is coming, do they find the dull days, passed in waiting for it, days which they are not able to remember when they look back? This is my unfortunate case. Night after night, I have gone to bed without so much as opening my Journal. There was nothing worth writing about, nothing that I could

recollect, until the postman came to-day. I ran downstairs, when I heard his ring at the bell, and stopped Maria on her way to the study. There, among Papa's usual handful of letters, was a letter for me.

"DEAR MISS EUNICE,

* * * * * *

"Yours ever truly."

I quote the passages in Philip's letter which most deeply interest me—I am his dear Miss; and he is mine ever truly. The other part of the letter told me that he had been detained in London, and he lamented it. At the end was a delightful announcement that he was coming to me by the afternoon train. I ran upstairs to see how I looked in the glass.

My first feeling was regret. For the thousandth time, I was obliged to acknowledge that I was not as pretty as Helena. But this passed off. A cheering reflection occurred to me. Philip would not have found, in my sister's face, what seems to have interested him in my face. Besides, there is my figure.

The pity of it is that I am so ignorant about

some things. If I had been allowed to read novels, I might (judging by what Papa said against them in one of his sermons) have felt sure of my own attractions; I might even have understood what Philip really thought of me. However, my mind was quite unexpectedly set at ease on the subject of my figure. The manner in which it happened was so amusing—at least, so amusing to me—that I cannot resist mentioning it.

My sister and I are forbidden to read newspapers, as well as novels. But the teachers at the Girl's Scripture Class are too old to be treated in this way. When the morning lessons were over, one of them was reading the newspaper to the other, in the empty school-room; I being in the passage outside, putting on my cloak.

It was a report of "an application made to the magistrates by the lady of his worship the Mayor." Hearing this, I stopped to listen. The lady of his worship (what a funny way of describing a man's wife!) is reported to be a little too fond of notoriety and to like hearing the sound of her own voice on public occasions. But this is only my writing; I had better get back to the report. "In her address to the magistrates, the Mayoress stated that she had seen a disgusting photograph in the shop window of

a stationer, lately established in the town. She desired to bring this person within reach of the law, and to have all his copies of the shameless photograph destroyed. The usher of the court was thereupon sent to purchase the photograph."—On second thoughts, I prefer going back to my own writing again; it is so uninteresting to copy other peoples' writing. Two of the magistrates were doing justice. They looked at the photograph—and what did it represent? The famous statue called the Venus de' Medici! One of the magistrates took this discovery indignantly. He was shocked at the gross ignorance which could call the classic ideal of beauty and grace a disgusting work. The other one made polite allowances. He thought the lady was much to be pitied; she was evidently the innocent victim of a neglected education. Mrs. Mayor left the court in a rage, telling the justices she knew where to get law. "I shall expose Venus," she said, "to the Lord Chancellor."

When the Scripture Class had broken up for the day, duty ought to have taken me home. Curiosity led me astray—I mean, led me to the stationer's window.

There I found our two teachers, absorbed in the photograph; having got to the shop first by a short

cut. They seemed to think I had taken a liberty when I joined them. "We are here," they were careful to explain, "to get a lesson in the ideal of beauty and grace." There was quite a little crowd of townsfolk collected before the window. Some of them giggled; and some of them wondered whether it was taken from the life. For my own part, gratitude to Venus obliges me to own that she effected a great improvement in the state of my mind. She encouraged me. If that stumpy little creature—with no waist, and oh, such uncertain legs!—represented the ideal of beauty and grace, I had reason indeed to be satisfied with my own figure, and to think it quite possible that my sweetheart's favourable opinion of me was not ill-bestowed.

I was at the bedroom window when the time approached for Philip's arrival.

Quite at the far end of the road, I discovered him. He was on foot; he walked like a King. Not that I ever saw a King, but I have my ideal. Ah, what a smile he gave me, when I made him look up by waving my handkerchief out of the window! "Ask for Papa," I whispered as he ascended the house-steps.

The next thing to do was to wait, as patiently as I could, to be sent for downstairs. Maria came

to me in a state of excitement. "Oh, Miss, what a handsome young gentleman, and how beautifully dressed! Is he——?" Instead of finishing what she had to say, she looked at me with a sly smile. I looked at her with a sly smile. We were certainly a couple of fools. But, dear me, how happy sometimes a fool can be!

My enjoyment of that delightful time was checked when I went into the drawing-room.

I had expected to see Papa's face made beautiful by his winning smile. He was not only serious; he actually seemed to be ill at ease when he looked at me. At the same time, I saw nothing to make me conclude that Philip had produced an unfavourable impression. The truth is, we were all three on our best behaviour, and we showed it. Philip had brought with him a letter from Mrs. Staveley, introducing him to Papa. We spoke of the Staveleys, of the weather, of the Cathedral—and then there seemed to be nothing more left to talk about.

In the silence that followed—what a dreadful thing silence is!—Papa was sent for to see somebody who had called on business. He made his excuses in his sweetest manner, but still seriously. When he and Philip had shaken hands, would he leave us together? No; he waited. Poor Philip

had no choice but to take leave of me. Papa then went out by the door that led into his study, and I was left alone.

Can any words say how wretched I felt?

I had hoped so much from that first meeting—and where were my hopes now? A profane wish that I had never been born was finding its way into my mind, when the door of the room was opened softly, from the side of the passage. Maria, dear Maria, the best friend I have, peeped in. She whispered: "Go into the garden, Miss, and you will find somebody there who is dying to see you. Mind you let him out by the shrubbery gate." I squeezed her hand; I asked if she had tried the shrubbery gate with a sweetheart of her own. "Hundreds of times, Miss."

Was it wrong for me to go to Philip in the garden? Oh, there is no end to objections! Perhaps I did it *because* it was wrong. Perhaps I had been kept on my best behaviour too long for human endurance.

How sadly disappointed he looked! And how rashly he had placed himself just where he could be seen from the back windows! I took his arm and led him to the end of the garden. There, we

were out of the reach of inquisitive eyes; and there we sat down together, under the big mulberry tree.

"Oh, Eunice, your father doesn't like me!"

Those were his first words. In justice to Papa (and a little for my own sake too) I told him he was quite wrong. I said: "Trust my father's goodness, trust his kindness, as I do."

He made no reply. His silence was sufficiently expressive; he looked at me fondly.

I may be wrong, but fond looks surely require an acknowledgment of some kind? Is a young woman guilty of boldness who only follows her impulses? I slipped my hand into his hand. Philip seemed to like it. We returned to our conversation.

He began: "Tell me, dear, is Mr. Gracedieu always as serious as he is to-day?"

"Oh, no!"

"When he takes exercise, does he ride? or does he walk?"

"Papa always walks."

"By himself?"

"Sometimes by himself. Sometimes with me. Do you want to meet him when he goes out?"

"Yes."

"When he is out with me?"

"No. When he is out by himself."

Was it possible to tell me more plainly that I was not wanted? I did my best to express indignation by snatching my hand away from him. He was completely taken by surprise.

"Eunice! don't you understand me?"

I was as stupid and as disagreeable as I could possibly be: "No; I don't!"

"Then let me help you," he said, with a patience which I had not deserved.

Up to that moment I had been leaning against the back of a garden chair. Something else now got between me and my chair. It stole round my waist—it held me gently—it strengthened its hold —it improved my temper—it made me fit to understand him. All done by what? Only an arm!

Philip went on:

"I want to ask your father to do me the greatest of all favours—and there is no time to lose. Every day, I expect to get a letter which may recall me to Ireland."

My heart sank at this horrid prospect; and in some mysterious way my head must have felt it too. I mean that I found my head resting on his shoulder. He went on:

"How am I to get my opportunity of speaking to Mr. Gracedieu? I mustn't call on him again as

soon as to-morrow or next day. But I might meet him, out walking alone, if you will tell me how to do it. A note to my hotel is all I want. Don't tremble, my sweet. If you are not present at the time, do you see any objection to my owning to your father that I love you?"

I felt his delicate consideration for me—I did indeed feel it gratefully. If he only spoke first, how well I should get on with Papa afterwards! The prospect before me was exquisitely encouraging. I agreed with Philip in everything; and I waited (how eagerly was only known to myself) to hear what he would say to me next. He prophesied next:

"When I have told your father that I love you, he will expect me to tell him something else. Can you guess what it is?"

If I had not been confused, perhaps I might have found the answer to this. As it was, I left him to reply to himself. He did it, in words which I shall remember as long as I live.

"Dearest Eunice, when your father has heard my confession, he will suspect that there is another confession to follow it—he will want to know if you love me. My angel, will my hopes be your hopes too, when I answer him?"

What there was in this to make my heart beat

so violently that I felt as if I was being stifled, is more than I can tell. He leaned so close to me, so tenderly, so delightfully close, that our faces nearly touched. He whispered: "Say you love me, in a kiss!"

His lips touched my lips, pressed them, dwelt on them—oh, how can I tell of it! Some new enchantment of feeling ran deliciously through and through me. I forgot my own self; I only knew of one person in the world. He was master of my lips; he was master of my heart. When he whispered: "Kiss me," I kissed him. What a moment it was! A faintness stole over me; I felt as if I was going to die some exquisite death; I laid myself back away from him — I was not able to speak. There was no need for it; my thoughts and his thoughts were one—he knew that I was quite overcome; he saw that he must leave me to recover myself alone. I pointed to the shrubbery gate. We took one long last look at each other for that day; the trees hid him; I was left by myself.

CHAPTER XX.

EUNICE'S DIARY.

How long a time passed before my composure came back to me, I cannot remember now. It seemed as if I was waiting through some interval of my life that was a mystery to myself. I was content to wait, and feel the light evening air in the garden wafting happiness over me. And all this had come from a kiss! I can call the time to mind when I used to wonder why people made such a fuss about kissing.

I had been indebted to Maria for my first taste of Paradise. I was recalled by Maria to the world that I had been accustomed to live in; the world that was beginning to fade away in my memory already. She had been sent to the garden in search of me; and she had a word of advice to offer, after noticing my face when I stepped out of the shadow of the tree: "Try to look more like yourself, Miss, before you let them see you at the tea-table."

Papa and Miss Jillgall were sitting together talk-

ing, when I opened the door. They left off when they saw me; and I supposed, quite correctly as it turned out, that I had been one of the subjects in their course of conversation. My poor father seemed to be sadly anxious and out of sorts. Miss Jillgall, if I had been in the humour to enjoy it, would have been more amusing than ever. One of her funny little eyes persisted in winking at me; and her heavy foot had something to say to my foot, under the table, which meant a great deal perhaps, but which only succeeded in hurting me.

My father left us; and Miss Jillgall explained herself.

"I know, dearest Euneece, that we have only been acquainted for a day or two, and that I ought not perhaps to have expected you to confide in me so soon. Can I trust you not to betray me if I set an example of confidence? Ah, I see I can trust you! And, my dear, I do so enjoy telling secrets to a friend. Hush! Your father, your excellent father, has been talking to me about young Mr. Dunboyne."

She provokingly stopped there. I entreated her to go on. She invited me to sit on her knee. "I want to whisper," she said. It was too ridiculous—but I did it. Miss Jillgall's whisper told me serious news.

"The minister has some reason, Euneece, for disapproving of Mr. Dunboyne; but, mind this, I don't think he has a bad opinion of the young man himself. He is going to return Mr. Dunboyne's call. Oh, I do so hate formality; I really can't go on talking of *Mr.* Dunboyne. Tell me his Christian name. Ah, what a noble name! How I long to be useful to him! To-morrow, my dear, after the one o'clock dinner, your Papa will call on Philip, at his hotel. I hope he won't be out, just at the wrong time."

I resolved to prevent that unlucky accident by writing to Philip. If Miss Jillgall would have allowed it, I should have begun my letter at once. But she had more to say; and she was stronger than I was, and still kept me on her knee.

"It all looks bright enough so far, doesn't it, dear sister? Will you let me be your second sister? I do so love you, Euneece. Thank you! thank you! But the gloomy side of the picture is to come next. The minister—no! now I am your sister I must call him Papa; it makes me feel so young again! Well, then, Papa has asked me to be your companion whenever you go out. 'Euneece is too young and too attractive to be walking about this great town (in Helena's absence) by herself.' That was how he put it. Slyly enough, if one may say so of so good

a man. And he used your sister (didn't he?) as a kind of excuse. I wish your sister was as nice as you are. However, the point is, why am I to be your companion? Because, dear child, you and your young gentleman are not to make appointments and to meet each other alone. Oh, yes—that's it! Your father is quite willing to return Philip's call; he proposes (as a matter of civility to Mrs. Staveley) to ask Philip to dinner; but, mark my words, he doesn't mean to let Philip have you for his wife."

I jumped off her lap; it was horrible to hear her. "Oh," I said, "*can* you be right about it?"

Miss Jillgall jumped up too. She has foreign ways of shrugging her shoulders and making signs with her hands. On this occasion she laid both hands on the upper part of her dress, just below her throat, and mysteriously shook her head.

"When my views are directed by my affections," she assured me, "I never see wrong. My bosom is my strong point."

She has no bosom, poor soul—but I understood what she meant. It failed to have any soothing effect on my feelings. I felt grieved and angry and puzzled, all in one. Miss Jillgall stood looking at me, with her hands still on the place where her

bosom was supposed to be. She made my temper hotter than ever.

"I mean to marry Philip," I said.

"Certainly, my dear Euneece. But please don't be so fierce about it."

"If my father does really object to my marriage," I went on, "it must be because he dislikes Philip. There can be no other reason."

"Oh, yes, dear—there can."

"What is the reason, then?"

"That, my sweet girl, is one of the things that we have got to find out."

* * * * *

The post of this morning brought a letter from my sister. We were to expect her return by the next day's train. This was good news. Philip and I might stand in need of clever Helena's help, and we might be sure of getting it now.

In writing to Philip, I had asked him to let me hear how Papa and he had got on at the hotel.

I won't say how often I consulted my watch, or how often I looked out of the window for a man with a letter in his hand. It will be better to get on at once to the discouraging end of it, when the report of the interview reached me at last. Twice, Philip had attempted to ask for my hand in marriage—

and twice my father had "deliberately, obstinately" (Philip's own words) changed the subject. Even this was not all. As if he was determined to show that Miss Jillgall was perfectly right, and I perfectly wrong, Papa (civil to Philip as long as he did not talk of Me) had asked him to dine with us, and Philip had accepted the invitation!

What were we to think of it? What were we to do?

I wrote back to my dear love (so cruelly used) to tell him that Helena was expected to return on the next day, and that her opinion would be of the greatest value to both of us. In a postscript, I mentioned the hour at which we were going to the station to meet my sister. When I say "we," I mean Miss Jillgall as well as myself.

* * * * *

We found him waiting for us at the railway. I am afraid he resented Papa's incomprehensible resolution not to give him a hearing. He was silent and sullen. I could not conceal that to see this state of feeling distressed me. He showed how truly he deserved to be loved—he begged my pardon, and he became his own sweet self again directly. I am more determined to marry him than ever.

When the train entered the station, all the carriages were full. I went one way, thinking I had seen Helena. Miss Jillgall went the other way, under the same impression. Philip was a little way behind me.

Not seeing my sister, I had just turned back, when a young man jumped out of a carriage, opposite Philip, and recognised and shook hands with him. I was just near enough to hear the stranger say, "Look at the girl in our carriage." Philip looked. "What a charming creature!" he said, and then checked himself for fear the young lady should hear him. She had just handed her travelling bag and wraps to a porter, and was getting out. Philip politely offered his hand to help her. She looked my way. The charming creature of my sweetheart's admiration was, to my infinite amusement, Helena herself.

CHAPTER XXI.

HELENA'S DIARY.

THE day of my return marks an occasion which I am not likely to forget. Hours have passed since I came home—and my agitation still forbids the thought of repose.

As I sit at my desk I see Eunice in bed, sleeping peacefully, except when she is murmuring enjoyment in some happy dream. To what end has my sister been advancing blindfold, and (who knows?) dragging me with her, since that disastrous visit to our friends in London? Strange that there should be a leaven of superstition in *my* nature! Strange that I should feel fear of something—I hardly know what!

I have met somewhere (perhaps in my historical reading) with the expression: "A chain of events." Was I at the beginning of that chain, when I entered the railway carriage on my journey home?

Among the other passengers there was a young gentleman, accompanied by a lady who proved to be his sister. They were both well-bred people. The brother evidently admired me, and did his best to make himself agreeable. Time passed quickly in pleasant talk, and my vanity was flattered—and that was all.

My fellow-travellers were going on to London. When the train reached our station the young lady sent her brother to buy some fruit, which she saw in the window of the refreshment-room. The first man whom he encountered on the platform was one of his friends, to whom he said something which I failed to hear. When I handed my travelling bag

and my wraps to the porter, and showed myself at the carriage door, I heard the friend say: "What a charming creature!" Having nothing to conceal in a journal which I protect by a lock, I may own that the stranger's personal appearance struck me, and that what I felt this time was not flattered vanity, but gratified pride. He was young, he was remarkably handsome, he was a distinguished-looking man.

All this happened in one moment. In the moment that followed, I found myself in Eunice's arms. That odious person, Miss Jillgall, insisted on embracing me next. And then I was conscious of an indescribable feeling of surprise. Eunice presented the distinguished-looking gentleman to me as a friend of hers—Mr. Philip Dunboyne.

"I had the honour of meeting your sister," he said, "in London, at Mr. Staveley's house." He went on to speak easily and gracefully of the journey I had taken, and of his friend who had been my fellow-traveller; and he attended us to the railway omnibus before he took his leave. I observed that Eunice had something to say to him confidentially, before they parted. This was another example of my sister's childish character; she is instantly familiar with new acquaintances, if she happens to like them.

I anticipated some amusement from hearing how she had contrived to establish confidential relations with a highly-cultivated man like Mr. Dunboyne. But, while Miss Jillgall was with us, it was just as well to keep within the limits of common-place conversation.

Before we got out of the omnibus I had, however, observed one undesirable result of my absence from home. Eunice and Miss Jillgall—the latter, having, no doubt, finely flattered the former—appeared to have taken a strong liking to each other.

Two curious circumstances also caught my attention. I saw a change to, what I call self-assertion, in my sister's manner; something seemed to have raised her in her own estimation. Then, again, Miss Jillgall was not like her customary self. She had delightful moments of silence; and when Eunice asked how I liked Mr. Dunboyne, she listened to my reply with an appearance of interest in her ugly face, which was quite a new revelation in my experience of my father's cousin.

These little discoveries (after what I had already observed at the railway station) ought perhaps to have prepared me for what was to come, when my sister and I were alone in our room. But Eunice, whether she meant to do it or not, baffled my

customary penetration. She looked as if she had plenty of news to tell me—with some obstacle in the way of doing it, which appeared to amuse instead of annoying her. If there is one thing more than another that I hate, it is being puzzled. I asked at once if anything remarkable had happened during Eunice's visit to London.

She smiled mischievously. "I have got a delicious surprise for you, my dear; and I do so enjoy prolonging it. Tell me, Helena, what did you propose we should both do when we found ourselves at home again?"

My memory was at fault. Eunice's good spirits became absolutely boisterous. She called out: "Catch!" and tossed her journal into my hands, across the whole length of the room. "We were to read each other's diaries," she said. "There is mine to begin with."

Innocent of any suspicion of the true state of affairs, I began the reading of Eunice's journal.

If I had not seen the familiar handwriting, nothing would have induced me to believe that a girl brought up in a pious household, the well-beloved daughter of a distinguished Congregational Minister, could have written that shameless record of passions unknown to young ladies in respectable English life.

What to say, what to do, when I had closed the book, was more than I felt myself equal to decide. My wretched sister spared me the anxiety which I might otherwise have felt. It was she who first opened her lips, after the silence that had fallen on us while I was reading. These were literally the words that she said:

"My darling, why don't you congratulate me?"

No argument could have persuaded me, as this persuaded me, that all sisterly remonstrance on my part would be completely thrown away.

"My dear Eunice," I said, "let me beg you to excuse me. I am waiting——"

There she interrupted me—and, oh, in what an impudent manner! She took my chin between her finger and thumb, and lifted my downcast face, and looked at me with an appearance of eager expectation which I was quite at a loss to understand.

"You have been away from home, too," she said. "Do I see in this serious face some astonishing news waiting to overpower me? Have *you* found a sweetheart? Are *you* engaged to be married?"

I only put her hand away from me, and advised her to return to her chair. This perfectly harmless proceeding seemed absolutely to frighten her.

"Oh, my dear," she burst out, "surely you are not jealous of me?"

There was but one possible reply to this: I laughed at it. Is Eunice's head turned? She kissed me!

"Now you laugh," she said, "I begin to understand you again; I ought to have known that you are superior to jealousy. But, do tell me, would it be so very wonderful if other girls found something to envy in my good luck? Just think of it! Such a handsome man, such an agreeable man, such a clever man, such a rich man—and, not the least of his merits, by-the-bye, a man who admires You. Come! if you won't congratulate me, congratulate yourself on having such a brother-in-law in prospect!"

Her head *was* turned. I drew the poor soul's attention compassionately to what I had said a moment since.

"Pardon me, dear, for reminding you that I have not yet refused to offer my congratulations. I only told you I was waiting."

"For what?"

"Waiting, of course, to hear what my father thinks of your wonderful good luck."

This explanation, offered with the kindest intentions, produced another change in my very variable sister. I had extinguished her good spirits as I

might have extinguished a light. She sat down by me, and sighed in the saddest manner. The heart must be hard indeed which can resist the distress of a person who is dear to us. I put my arm round her; she was becoming once more the Eunice whom I so dearly loved.

"My poor child," I said, "don't distress yourself by speaking of it; I understand. Your father objects to your marrying Mr. Dunboyne."

She shook her head. "I can't exactly say, Helena, that Papa does that. He only behaves very strangely."

"Am I indiscreet, dear, if I ask in what way father's behaviour has surprised you?"

She was quite willing to enlighten me. It was a simple little story which, to my mind, sufficiently explained the strange behaviour that had puzzled my unfortunate sister.

There could indeed be no doubt that my father considered Eunice far too childish in character, as yet, to undertake the duties of matrimony. But, with his customary delicacy, and dread of causing distress to others, he had deferred the disagreeable duty of communicating his opinion to Mr. Dunboyne. The adverse decision must, however, be sooner or later announced; and he had arranged to inflict dis-

appointment, as tenderly as might be, at his own table.

Considerately leaving Eunice in the enjoyment of any vain hopes which she may have founded on the event of the dinner-party, I passed the evening until supper-time came, in the study with my father.

Our talk was mainly devoted to the worthy people with whom I had been staying, and whose new schools I had helped to found. Not a word was said relating to my sister, or to Mr. Dunboyne. Poor father looked so sadly weary and ill that I ventured, after what the doctor had said to Eunice, to hint at the value of rest and change of scene to an overworked man. Oh, dear me, he frowned, and waved the subject away from him impatiently, with a wan pale hand.

After supper, I made an unpleasant discovery.

Not having completely finished the unpacking of my boxes, I left Miss Jillgall and Eunice in the drawing-room, and went upstairs. In half an hour I returned, and found the room empty. What had become of them? It was a fine moonlight night; I stepped into the back drawing-room, and looked out of the window. There they were, walking arm-in-arm with their heads close together, deep in talk. With my knowledge of Miss Jillgall, I call this a bad sign.

An odd thought has just come to me. I wonder what might have happened, if I had been visiting at Mrs. Staveley's, instead of Eunice, and if Mr. Dunboyne had seen me first.

Absurd! If I was not too tired to do anything more, those last lines should be scratched out.

CHAPTER XXII.

EUNICE'S DIARY.

I SAID SO to Miss Jillgall, and I say it again here. Nothing will induce me to think ill of Helena.

My sister is a good deal tired, and a little out of temper after the railway journey. This is exactly what happened to me when I went to London. I attribute her refusal to let me read her journal, after she had read mine, entirely to the disagreeable consequences of travelling by railway. Miss Jillgall accounted for it otherwise, in her own funny manner: "My sweet child, your sister's diary is full of abuse of poor me." I humoured the joke: "Dearest Selina, keep a diary of your own, and fill it with abuse of my sister." This seemed to be a droll saying at the time. But it doesn't look particularly amusing, now it is written down. We had ginger wine at

supper, to celebrate Helena's return. Although I only drank one glass, I dare say it may have got into my head.

However that may be, when the lovely moonlight tempted us into the garden, there was an end to our jokes. We had something to talk about which still dwells disagreeably on my mind.

Miss Jillgall began it.

"If I trust you, dearest Euneece, with my own precious secrets, shall I never, never, never live to repent it?"

I told my good little friend that she might depend on me, provided her secrets did no harm to any person whom I loved.

She clasped her hands and looked up at the moon—I can only suppose that her sentiments overpowered her. She said, very prettily, that her heart and my heart beat together in heavenly harmony. It is needless to add that this satisfied me.

Miss Jillgall's generous confidence in my discretion was, I am afraid, not rewarded as it ought to have been. I found her tiresome at first.

She spoke of an excellent friend (a lady), who had helped her, at the time when she lost her little fortune, by raising a subscription privately to pay the expenses of her return to England. Her friend's

name—not very attractive to English ears—was Mrs. Tenbruggen; they had first become acquainted under interesting circumstances. Miss Jillgall happened to mention that my father was her only living relative; and it turned out that Mrs. Tenbruggen was familiar with his name, and reverenced his fame as a preacher. When he had generously received his poor helpless cousin under his own roof, Miss Jillgall's gratitude and sense of duty impelled her to write, and tell Mrs. Tenbruggen how happy she was as a member of our family.

Let me confess that I began to listen more attentively when the narrative reached this point.

"I drew a little picture of our domestic circle here," Miss Jillgall said, describing her letter; "and I mentioned the mystery in which Mr. Gracedieu conceals the ages of you two dear girls. Mrs. Tenbruggen—shall we shorten her ugly name, and call her Mrs. T.? Very well—Mrs. T. is a remarkably clever woman, and I looked for interesting results, if she would give her opinion of the mysterious circumstance mentioned in my letter."

By this time, I was all eagerness to hear more.

"Has she written to you?" I asked.

Miss Jillgall looked at me affectionately, and took the reply out of her pocket.

"Listen, Euneece; and you shall hear her own words. Thus she writes:

"'Your letter, dear Selina, especially interests me by what it says about the *two* Miss Gracedieus.' —Look, dear; she underlines the word Two. Why, I can't explain. Can you? Ah, I thought not. Well, let us get back to the letter. My accomplished friend continues in these terms:

"'I can understand the surprise which you have felt at the strange course taken by their father, as a means of concealing the difference which there must be in the ages of these young ladies. Many years since, I happened to discover a romantic incident in the life of your popular preacher, which he has his reasons, as I suspect, for keeping strictly to himself. If I may venture on a bold guess, I should say that any person who could discover which was the oldest of the two daughters, would be also likely to discover the true nature of the romance in Mr. Gracedieu's life.' — Isn't that very remarkable, Euneece? You don't seem to see it — you funny child! Pray pay particular attention to what comes next. These are the closing sentences in my friend's letter:

"'If you find anything new to tell me which relates to this interesting subject, direct your letter as

before—provided you write within a week from the present time. Afterwards, my letters will be received by the English physician whose card I enclose. You will be pleased to hear that my professional interests call me to London at the earliest moment that I can spare.'—There, dear child, the letter comes to an end. I dare say you wonder what Mrs. T. means, when she alludes to her professional interests?"

No: I was not wondering about anything. It hurt me to hear of a strange woman exercising her ingenuity in guessing at mysteries in Papa's life.

But Miss Jillgall was too eagerly bent on setting forth the merits of her friend to notice this. I now heard that Mrs. T.'s marriage had turned out badly, and that she had been reduced to earn her own bread. Her manner of doing this was something quite new to me. She went about, from one place to another, curing people of all sorts of painful maladies, by a way she had of rubbing them with her hands. In Belgium she was called a "Masseuse." When I asked what this meant in English, I was told, "Medical Rubber," and that the fame of Mrs. T.'s wonderful cures had reached some of the medical newspapers published in London.

After listening (I must say for myself) very

patiently, I was bold enough to own that my interest in what I had just heard was not quite so plain to me as I could have wished it to be.

Miss Jillgall looked shocked at my stupidity. She reminded me that there was a mystery in Mrs. Tenbruggen's letter, and a mystery in Papa's strange conduct towards Philip. "Put two and two together, darling," she said; "and, one of these days, they may make four."

If this meant anything, it meant that the reason which made Papa keep Helena's age and my age unknown to everybody but himself, was also the reason why he seemed to be so strangely unwilling to let me be Philip's wife. I really could not endure to take such a view of it as that, and begged Miss Jillgall to drop the subject. She was as kind as ever.

"With all my heart, dear. But don't deceive yourself—the subject will turn up again when we least expect it."

CHAPTER XXIII.

EUNICE'S DIARY.

ONLY two days now, before we give our little dinner-party, and Philip finds his opportunity of speaking to Papa. Oh, how I wish that day had come and gone!

I try not to take gloomy views of things; but I am not quite so happy as I had expected to be when my dear was in the same town with me. If Papa had encouraged him to call again, we might have had some precious time to ourselves. As it is, we can only meet in the different show-places in the town—with Helena on one side, and Miss Jill-gall on the other, to take care of us. I do call it cruel not to let two young people love each other, without setting third persons to watch them. If I was Queen of England, I would have pretty private bowers made for lovers, in the summer, and nice warm little rooms to hold two, in the winter. Why not? What harm could come of it, I should like to know!

The cathedral is the place of meeting which we

find most convenient, under the circumstances. There are delightful nooks and corners about this celebrated building, in which lovers can lag behind. If we had been in Papa's chapel I should have hesitated to turn it to such a profane use as this; the cathedral doesn't so much matter.

Shall I own that I felt my inferiority to Helena a little keenly? She could tell Philip so many things that I should have liked to tell him first. My clever sister taught him how to pronounce the name of the bishop who began building the cathedral; she led him over the crypt, and told him how old it was. He was interested in the crypt; he talked to Helena (not to me) of his ambition to write a work on cathedral architecture in England; he made a rough little sketch in his book of our famous tomb of some King. Helena knew the late royal personage's name, and Philip showed his sketch to her before he showed it to me. How can I blame him, when I stood there the picture of stupidity, trying to recollect something that I might tell him, if it was only the Dean's name? Helena might have whispered it to me, I think. She remembered it, not I—and mentioned it to Philip, of course. I kept close by him all the time, and now and then he gave me a look which raised my spirits. He might have given me some-

thing better than that—I mean a kiss—when we had left the cathedral, and were by ourselves for a moment in a corner of the Dean's garden. But he missed the opportunity. Perhaps he was afraid of the Dean himself coming that way, and happening to see us? However, I am far from thinking the worse of Philip. I gave his arm a little squeeze—and that was better than nothing.

* * * * *

He and I took a walk along the bank of the river to-day; my sister and Miss Jillgall looking after us as usual.

On our way through the town, Helena stopped to give an order at a shop. She asked us to wait for her. That best of good creatures, Miss Jillgall, whispered in my ear: "Go on by yourselves, and leave me to wait for her." Philip interpreted this act of kindness in a manner which would have vexed me, if I had not understood that it was one of his jokes. He said to me: "Miss Jillgall sees a chance of annoying your sister, and enjoys the prospect."

Well, away we went together; it was just what I wanted; it gave me an opportunity of saying something to Philip, between ourselves.

I could now beg of him, in his interests and mine, to make the best of himself when he came to

dinner. Clever people, I told him, were people whom Papa liked and admired. I said: "Let him see, dear, how clever *you* are, and how many things you know—and you can't imagine what a high place you will have in his opinion. I hope you don't think I am taking too much on myself in telling you how to behave."

He relieved that doubt in a manner which I despair of describing. His eyes rested on me with such a look of exquisite sweetness and love, that I was obliged to hold by his arm, I trembled so with the pleasure of feeling it.

"I do sincerely believe," he said, "that you are the most innocent girl, the sweetest, truest girl that ever lived. I wish I was a better man, Eunice; I wish I was good enough to be worthy of you!"

To hear him speak of himself in that way jarred on me. If such words had fallen from any other man's lips, I should have been afraid that he had done something, or thought something, of which he had reason to feel ashamed. With Philip this was impossible.

He was eager to walk on rapidly, and to turn a corner in the path, before we could be seen. "I want to be alone with you," he said.

I looked back. We were too late; Helena and

Miss Jillgall had nearly overtaken us. My sister was on the point of speaking to Philip, when she seemed to change her mind, and only looked at him. Instead of looking at her in return, he kept his eyes cast down, and drew figures on the pathway with his stick. I think Helena was out of temper; she suddenly turned my way. "Why didn't you wait for me?" she asked.

Philip took her up sharply. "If Eunice likes seeing the river better than waiting in the street," he said, "isn't she free to do as she pleases?"

Helena said nothing more; Philip walked on slowly by himself. Not knowing what to make of it, I turned to Miss Jillgall.

"Surely Philip can't have quarrelled with Helena?" I said.

Miss Jillgall answered in an odd off-hand manner: "Not he! He is a great deal more likely to have quarrelled with himself."

"Why?"

"Suppose you ask him why?"

It was not to be thought of; it would have looked like prying into his thoughts. "Selina!" I said, "there is something odd about you to-day. What is the matter? I don't understand you."

"My poor dear, you will find yourself under-

standing me before long." I thought I saw something like pity in her face when she said that.

"My poor dear?" I repeated. "What makes you speak to me in that way?"

"I don't know—I'm tired; I'm an old fool—I'll go back to the house."

Without another word, she left me. I turned to look for Philip, and saw that my sister had joined him while I had been speaking to Miss Jillgall. It pleased me to find that they were talking in a friendly way when I joined them. A quarrel between Helena and my husband that is to be—no, my husband that *shall* be—would have been too distressing, too unnatural I might almost call it.

Philip looked along the backward path, and asked what had become of Miss Jillgall. "Have you any objection to follow her example?" he said to me, when I told him that Selina had returned to the town. "I don't care for the banks of this river."

Helena, who used to like the river at other times, was as ready as Philip to leave it now. I fancy they had both been kindly waiting to change our walk, till I came to them, and they could study my wishes too. Of course I was ready to go where they pleased. I asked Philip if there was anything he would like to see, when we got into the streets again.

Clever Helena suggested what seemed to be a strange amusement to offer to Philip. "Let's take him to the Girls' School," she said.

It appeared to be a matter of perfect indifference to him; he was, what they call, ironical. "Oh, yes, of course. Deeply interesting! deeply interesting!" He suddenly broke into the wildest good spirits, and tucked my hand under his arm with a gaiety which it was impossible to resist. "What a boy you are!" Helena said, enjoying his delightful hilarity as I did.

CHAPTER XXIV.

EUNICE'S DIARY.

On entering the schoolroom we lost our gaiety, all in a moment. Something unpleasant had evidently happened.

Two of the eldest girls were sitting together in a corner, separated from the rest, and looking most wickedly sulky. The teachers were at the other end of the room, appearing to be ill at ease. And there, standing in the midst of them, with his face flushed and his eyes angry—there was Papa; sadly unlike his gentle self in the days of his health and happi-

ness. On former occasions, when the exercise of his authority was required in the school, his forbearing temper always set things right. When I saw him now, I thought of what the doctor had said of his health, on my way home from the station.

Papa advanced to us the moment we showed ourselves at the door.

He shook hands--cordially shook hands—with Philip. It was delightful to see him, delightful to hear him say: "Pray don't suppose, Mr. Dunboyne, that you are intruding; remain with us by all means if you like." Then he spoke to Helena and to me, still excited, still not like himself: "You couldn't have come here, my dears, at a time when your presence was more urgently needed." He turned to the teachers. "Tell my daughters what has happened; tell them, why they see me here—shocked and distressed, I don't deny it."

We now heard that the two girls in disgrace had broken the rules, and in such a manner as to deserve severe punishment.

One of them had been discovered hiding a novel in her desk. The other had misbehaved herself more seriously still—she had gone to the theatre. Instead of expressing any regret, they had actually dared to complain of having to learn Papa's improved

catechism. They had even accused him of treating them with severity, because they were poor girls brought up on charity. "If we had been young ladies," they were audacious enough to say, "more indulgence would have been shown to us; we should have been allowed to read stories and to see plays."

All this time I had been asking myself what Papa meant, when he told us we could not have come to the schoolroom at a better time. His meaning now appeared. When he spoke to the offending girls, he pointed to Helena and to me.

"Here are my daughters," he said. "You will not deny that they are young ladies. Now listen. They shall tell you themselves whether my rules make any difference between them and you. Helena! Eunice! do I allow you to read novels? do I allow you to go to the play?"

We said, "No"—and hoped it was over. But he had not done yet. He turned to Helena.

"Answer some of the questions," he went on, "from my Manual of Christian Obligation, which the girls call my catechism. He asked one of the questions: "If you are told to do unto others as you would they should do unto you, and if you find a difficulty in obeying that Divine Precept, what does your duty require?"

It is my belief that Helena has the materials in her for making another Joan of Arc. She rose, and answered without the slightest sign of timidity: "My duty requires me to go to the minister, and to seek for advice and encouragement."

"And if these fail?"

"Then I am to remember that my pastor is my friend. He claims no priestly authority or priestly infallibility. He is my fellow-christian who loves me. He will tell me how he has himself failed; how he has struggled against himself; and what a blessed reward has followed his victory—a purified heart, a peaceful mind."

There Papa released my sister, after she had only repeated two out of all the answers in Christian Obligation, which we first began to learn when we were children. He then addressed himself again to the girls.

"Is what you have just heard a part of my catechism? Has my daughter been excused from repeating it because she is a young lady? Where is the difference between the religious education which is given to my own child, and given to you?"

The wretched girls still sat silent and obstinate, with their heads down. I tremble again as I write of what happened next. Papa fixed his eyes on

me. He said, out loud: "Eunice!"—and waited for me to rise and answer, as my sister had done.

It was entirely beyond my power to get on my feet.

Philip had (innocently, I am sure) discouraged me; I saw displeasure, I saw contempt in his face. There was a dead silence in the room. Everybody looked at me. My heart beat furiously, my hands turned cold, the questions and answers in Christian Obligation all left my memory together. I looked imploringly at Papa.

For the first time in his life, he was hard on me. His eyes were as angry as ever; they showed me no mercy. Oh, what had come to me? what evil spirit possessed me? I felt resentment; horrid, undutiful resentment, at being treated in this cruel way. My fists clenched themselves in my lap, my face felt as hot as fire. Instead of asking my father to excuse me, I said: "I can't do it." He was astounded, as well he might be. I went on from bad to worse. I said: "I won't do it."

He stooped over me; he whispered: "I am going to ask you something; I insist on your answering, Yes or No." He raised his voice, and drew himself back so that they could all see me.

"Have you been taught like your sister?" he

asked. "Has the catechism that has been her religious lesson, for all her life, been your religious lesson, for all your life, too?"

I said: "Yes"—and I was in such a rage that I said it out loud. If Philip had handed me his cane, and had advised me to give the young husseys who were answerable for this dreadful state of things a good beating, I believe I should have done it. Papa turned his back on me, and offered the girls a last chance: "Do you feel sorry for what you have done? Do you ask to be forgiven?"

Neither the one nor the other answered him. He called across the room to the teachers: "Those two pupils are expelled the school."

Both the women looked horrified. The elder of the two approached him, and tried to plead for a milder sentence. He answered in one stern word: "Silence!"—and left the schoolroom, without even a passing bow to Philip. And this, after he had cordially shaken hands with my poor dear, not half an hour before.

I ought to have made affectionate allowance for his nervous miseries; I ought to have run after him, and begged his pardon. There must be something wrong, I am afraid, in girls loving anybody but their fathers. When Helena led the way out by another

door, I ran after Philip; and I asked *him* to forgive me.

I don't know what I said; it was all confusion. The fear of having forfeited his fondness must, I suppose, have shaken my mind. I remember entreating Helena to say a kind word for me. She was so clever, she had behaved so well, she had deserved that Philip should listen to her. "Oh," I cried out to him, desperately, "what must you think of me?"

"I will tell you what I think of you," he said. "It is your father who is in fault, Eunice—not you. Nothing could have been in worse taste than his management of that trumpery affair in the schoolroom; it was a complete mistake from beginning to end. Make your mind easy; I don't blame You."

"Are you, really and truly, as fond of me as ever?"

"Yes, to be sure!"

Helena seemed to be hardly as much interested in this happy ending of my anxieties as I might have anticipated. She walked on by herself. Perhaps she was thinking of poor Papa's strange outbreak of excitement, and grieving over it.

We had only a little way to walk, before we passed the door of Philip's hotel. He had not yet

received the expected letter from his father—the cruel letter which might recall him to Ireland. It was then the hour of delivery by our second post; he went to look at the letter-rack in the hall. Helena saw that I was anxious. She was as kind again as ever; she consented to wait with me for Philip, at the door.

He came out to us with an open letter in his hand.

"From my father, at last," he said—and gave me the letter to read. It only contained these few lines:

"Do not be alarmed, my dear boy, at the change for the worse in my handwriting. I am suffering for my devotion to the studious habits of a lifetime: my right hand is attacked by the malady called Writer's Cramp. The doctor here can do nothing. He tells me of some foreign woman, mentioned in his newspaper, who cures nervous derangements of all kinds by hand-rubbing, and who is coming to London. When you next hear from me, I may be in London too."—There the letter ended.

Of course I knew who the foreign woman, mentioned in the newspaper, was.

But what does Miss Jillgall's friend matter to me? The one important thing is, that Philip has not

been called back to Ireland. Here is a fortunate circumstance, which perhaps means more good luck. I may be Mrs. Philip Dunboyne before the year is out.

CHAPTER XXV.

HELENA'S DIARY.

They all notice at home that I am looking worn and haggard. That hideous old maid, Miss Jillgall, had her malicious welcome ready for me when we met at breakfast this morning: "Dear Helena, what has become of your beauty? One would think you had left it in your room!" Poor deluded Eunice showed her sisterly sympathy: "Don't joke about it, Selina: can't you see that Helena is ill?"

I *have* been ill; ill of my own wickedness.

But the recovery of my tranquillity will bring with it the recovery of my good looks. My fatal passion for Philip promises to be the utter destruction of everything that is good in me. Well! what is good in me may not be worth keeping. There is a fate in these things. If I am destined to rob Eunice of the one dear object of her love and hope—how can I resist? The one kind thing I can do is

to keep her in ignorance of what is coming, by acts of affectionate deceit.

Besides, if she suffers, I suffer too. In the length and breadth of England, I doubt if there is a much more wicked young woman to be found than myself. Is it nothing to feel that, and to endure it as I do?

Upon my word, there is no excuse for me!

Is this sheer impudence? No; it is the bent of my nature. I have a tendency to self-examination, accompanied by one merit—I don't spare myself.

There are excuses for Eunice. She lives in a fool's paradise; and she sees in her lover a radiant creature, shining in the halo thrown over him by her own self-delusion. Nothing of this sort is to be said for me. I see Philip as he is. My penetration looks into the lowest depths of his character—when I am not in his company. There seems to be a foundation of good, somewhere in his nature. He despises and hates himself (he has confessed it to me), when Eunice is with him — still believing in her false sweetheart. But how long do these better influences last? I have only to show myself, in my sister's absence, and Philip is mine body and soul. His vanity and his weakness take possession of him the moment he sees my face. He is one of those men—even in my little experience I have met with them—who are

born to be led by women. If Eunice had possessed my strength of character, he would have been true to her for life.

Ought I not, in justice to myself, to have lifted my heart high above the reach of such a creature as this? Certainly I ought! I know it, I feel it. And yet, there is some fascination in loving him which I am absolutely unable to resist.

What, I ask myself, has fed the new flame which is burning in me? Did it begin with gratified pride? I might well feel proud when I found myself admired by a man of his beauty, set off by such manners and such accomplishments as his. Or, has the growth of this masterful feeling been encouraged by the envy and jealousy stirred in me, when I found Eunice (my inferior in every respect) distinguished by the devotion of a handsome lover, and having a brilliant marriage in view—while I was left neglected, with no prospect of changing my title from Miss to Mrs.? Vain inquiries! My wicked heart seems to have secrets of its own, and to keep them a mystery to me.

What has become of my excellent education?

I don't care to inquire; I have got beyond the reach of good books and righteous examples. Among my other blameable actions there may now be

reckoned disobedience to my father. I have been reading novels in secret.

At first I tried some of the famous English works, published at a price within the reach of small purses. Very well written, no doubt—but with one unpardonable drawback, so far as I am concerned. Our celebrated native authors address themselves to good people, or to penitent people who want to be made good; not to wicked readers like me.

Arriving at this conclusion, I tried another experiment. In a small bookseller's shop I discovered some cheap translations of French novels. Here, I found what I wanted—sympathy with sin. Here, there was opened to me a new world inhabited entirely by unrepentant people; the magnificent women diabolically beautiful; the satanic men dead to every sense of virtue, and alive—perhaps rather dirtily alive—to the splendid fascinations of crime. I know now that Love is above everything but itself. Love is the one law that we are all bound to obey. How deep! how consoling! how admirably true! The novelists of England have reason indeed to hide their heads before the novelists of France. All that I have felt, and have written here, is inspired by these wonderful authors.

I have relieved my mind, and may now return to the business of my diary—the record of domestic events.

An overwhelming disappointment has fallen on Eunice. Our dinner-party has been put off.

The state of father's health is answerable for this change in our arrangements. That wretched scene at the school, complicated by my sister's undutiful behaviour at the time, so seriously excited him that he passed a sleepless night, and kept his bedroom throughout the day. Eunice's total want of discretion added, no doubt, to his sufferings: she rudely intruded on him to express her regret and to ask his pardon. Having carried her point, she was at leisure to come to me, and to ask (how amazingly simple of her!) what she and Philip were to do next.

"We had arranged it all so nicely," the poor wretch began. "Philip was to have been so clever and agreeable at dinner, and was to have chosen his time so very discreetly, that Papa would have been ready to listen to anything he said. Oh, we should have succeeded; I haven't a doubt of it! Our only hope, Helena, is in you. What are we to do now?"

"Wait," I answered.

"Wait?" she repeated hotly. "Is my heart to

be broken? and, what is more cruel still, is Philip to be disappointed? I expected something more sensible, my dear, from you. What possible reason can there be for waiting?"

The reason—if I could only have mentioned it—was beyond dispute. I wanted time to quiet Philip's uneasy conscience, and to harden his weak mind against outbursts of violence, on Eunice's part, which would certainly exhibit themselves when she found that she had lost her lover, and lost him to me. In the meanwhile, I had to produce my reason for advising her to wait. It was easily done. I reminded her of the irritable condition of our father's nerves, and gave it as my opinion that he would certainly say No, if she was unwise enough to excite him on the subject of Philip, in his present frame of mind.

These unanswerable considerations seemed to produce the right effect on her. "I suppose you know best," was all she said. And then she left me.

I let her go without feeling any distrust of this act of submission on her part; it was such a common experience, in my life, to find my sister guiding herself by my advice. But experience is not always to be trusted. Events soon showed that I had failed to estimate Eunice's resources of obstinacy and cunning at their true value.

Half an hour later I heard the street door closed, and looked out of the window. Miss Jillgall was leaving the house; no one was with her. My dislike of this person led me astray once more. I ought to have suspected her of being bent on some mischievous errand, and to have devised some means of putting my suspicions to the test. I did nothing of the kind. In the moment when I turned my head away from the window, Miss Jillgall was a person forgotten—and I was a person who had made a serious mistake.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HELENA'S DIARY.

THE event of to-day began with the delivery of a message summoning me to my father's study. He had decided—too hastily, as I feared—that he was sufficiently recovered to resume his usual employments. I was writing to his dictation, when we were interrupted. Maria announced a visit from Mr. Dunboyne.

Hitherto, Philip had been content to send one of the servants of the hotel to make inquiry after Mr. Gracedieu's health. Why had he now called

personally? Noticing that father seemed to be annoyed, I tried to make an opportunity of receiving Philip myself. "Let me see him," I suggested; "I can easily say you are engaged."

Very unwillingly, as it was easy to see, my father declined to allow this. "Mr. Dunboyne's visit pays me a compliment," he said; "and I must receive him." I made a show of leaving the room, and was called back to my chair. "This is not a private interview, Helena; stay where you are."

Philip came in—handsomer than ever, beautifully dressed—and paid his respects to my father with his customary grace. He was too well bred to allow any visible signs of embarrassment to escape him. But when he shook hands with me, I felt a little trembling in his fingers, through the delicate gloves which fitted him like a second skin. Was it the true object of his visit to try the experiment designed by Eunice and himself, and deferred by the postponement of our dinner-party? Impossible surely that my sister could have practised on his weakness, and persuaded him to return to his first love! I waited, in breathless interest, for his next words. They were not worth listening to. Oh, the poor commonplace creature!

"I am glad, Mr. Gracedieu, to see that you are

well enough to be in your study again," he said. The writing materials on the table attracted his attention. "Am I one of the idle people," he asked, with his charming smile, "who are always interrupting useful employment?"

He spoke to my father, and he was answered by my father. Not once had he addressed a word to me—no, not even when we shook hands. I was angry enough to force him into taking some notice of me, and to make an attempt to confuse him at the same time.

"Have you seen my sister?" I asked.

"No."

It was the shortest reply that he could choose. Having flung it at me, he still persisted in looking at my father and speaking to my father: "Do you think of trying change of air, Mr. Gracedieu, when you feel strong enough to travel?"

"My duties keep me here," father answered; "and I cannot honestly say that I enjoy travelling. I dislike manners and customs that are strange to me; I don't find that hotels reward me for giving up the comforts of my own house. How do you find the hotel here?"

"I submit to the hotel, sir. They are sad savages in the kitchen; they put mushroom ketchup

into their soup, and mustard and cayenne pepper into their salads. I am half starved at dinner-time, but I don't complain."

Every word he said was an offence to me. With or without reason, I attacked him again.

"I have heard you acknowledge that the landlord and landlady are very obliging people," I said. "Why don't you ask them to let you make your own soup and mix your own salad?"

I wondered whether I should succeed in attracting his notice, after this. Even in these private pages, my self-esteem finds it hard to confess what happened. I succeeded in reminding Philip that he had his reasons for requesting me to leave the room.

"Will you excuse me, Miss Helena," he said, "if I ask leave to speak to Mr. Gracedieu in private?"

The right thing for me to do was, let me hope, the thing that I did. I rose, and waited to see if my father would interfere. He looked at Philip with suspicion in his face, as well as surprise. "May I ask," he said, coldly, "what is the object of the interview?"

"Certainly," Philip answered, "when we are alone." This cool reply placed my father between two alternatives; he must either give way, or be guilty

of an act of rudeness to a guest in his own house. The choice reserved for me was narrower still—I had to decide between being told to go, or going of my own accord. Of course, I left them together.

The door which communicated with the next room was pulled to, but not closed. On the other side of it, I found Eunice.

"Listening!" I said, in a whisper.

"Yes," she whispered back. "You listen, too!"

I was so indignant with Philip, and so seriously interested in what was going on in the study, that I yielded to temptation. We both degraded ourselves. We both listened.

Eunice's base lover spoke first. Judging by the change in his voice, he must have seen something in my father's face that daunted him. Eunice heard it too. "He's getting nervous," she whispered; "he'll forget to say the right thing at the right time."

"Mr. Gracedieu," Philip began, "I wish to speak to you——"

Father interrupted him: "We are alone now, Mr. Dunboyne. I want to know why you consult me in private."

"I am anxious to consult you, sir, on a subject——"

"On what subject? Any religious difficulty?"

"No."

"Anything I can do for you in the town?"

"Not at all. If you will only allow me——"

"I am still waiting, sir, to know what it is about."

Philip's voice suddenly became an angry voice. "Once for all, Mr. Gracedieu," he said, "will you let me speak? It's about your daughter——"

"No more of it, Mr. Dunboyne!" (My father was now as loud as Philip.) "I don't desire to hold a private conversation with you on the subject of my daughter."

"If you have any personal objection to me, sir, be so good as to state it plainly."

"You have no right to ask me to do that."

"You refuse to do it?"

"Positively."

"You are not very civil, Mr. Gracedieu."

"If I speak without ceremony, Mr. Dunboyne, you have yourself to thank for it."

Philip replied to this in a tone of savage irony. "You are a minister of religion, and you are an old man. Two privileges—and you presume on them both. Good-morning."

I drew back into a corner, just in time to escape

discovery in the character of a listener. Eunice never moved. When Philip dashed into the room, banging the door after him, she threw herself impulsively on his breast: "Oh, Philip! Philip! what have you done? Why didn't you keep your temper?"

"Did you hear what your father said to me?" he asked.

"Yes, dear; but you ought to have controlled yourself—you ought, indeed, for my sake."

Her arms were still round him. It struck me that he felt her influence. "If you wish me to recover myself," he said gently, "you had better let me go."

"Oh, how cruel, Philip, to leave me when I am so wretched! Why do you want to go?"

"You told me just now what I ought to do," he answered, still restraining himself. "If I am to get the better of my temper, I must be left alone."

"I never said anything about your temper, darling."

"Didn't you tell me to control myself?"

"Oh, yes! Go back to Papa, and beg him to forgive you."

"I'll see him damned first!"

If ever a stupid girl deserved such an answer as this, the girl was my sister. I had hitherto (with

some difficulty) refrained from interfering. But when Eunice tried to follow Philip out of the house, I could hesitate no longer; I held her back. "You fool," I said; "haven't you made mischief enough already?"

"What am I to do?" she burst out helplessly.

"Do what I told you to do yesterday—wait."

Before she could reply, or I could say anything more, the door that led to the landing was opened softly and slyly, and Miss Jillgall peeped in. Eunice instantly left me, and ran to the meddling old maid. They whispered to each other. Miss Jillgall's skinny arm encircled my sister's waist; they disappeared together.

I was only too glad to get rid of them both, and to take the opportunity of writing to Philip. I insisted on an explanation of his conduct while I was in the study—to be given within an hour's time, at a place which I appointed. "You are not to attempt to justify yourself in writing," I added in conclusion. "Let your reply merely inform me if you can keep the appointment. The rest, when we meet."

Maria took the letter to the hotel, with instructions to wait.

Philip's reply reached me without delay. It pledged him to justify himself as I had desired,

and to keep the appointment. My own belief is that the event of to-day will decide his future and mine.

CHAPTER XXVII.

EUNICE'S DIARY.

INDEED, I am a most unfortunate creature; everything turns out badly with me. My good true friend, my dear Selina, has become the object of a hateful doubt in my secret mind. I am afraid she is keeping something from me.

Talking with her about my troubles, I heard for the first time that she had written again to Mrs. Tenbruggen. The object of her letter was to tell her friend of my engagement to young Mr. Dunboyne. I asked her why she had done this. The answer informed me that there was no knowing, in the present state of my affairs, how soon I might not want the help of a clever woman. I ought, I suppose, to have been satisfied with this. But there seemed to be something not fully explained yet.

Then again, after telling Selina what I heard in the study, and how roughly Philip had spoken to me afterwards, I asked her what she thought of it.

She made an incomprehensible reply: "My sweet child, I mustn't think of it—I am too fond of you."

It was impossible to make her explain what this meant. She began to talk of Philip; assuring me (which was quite needless) that she had done her best to fortify and encourage him, before he called on Papa. When I asked her to help me in another way—that is to say, when I wanted to find out where Philip was at that moment—she had no advice to give me. I told her that I should not enjoy a moment's ease of mind until I and my dear one were reconciled. She only shook her head, and declared that she was sorry for me. When I hit on the idea of ringing for Maria, this little woman, so bright and quick and eager to help me at other times, said: "I leave it to you, dear," and turned to the piano (close to which I was sitting), and played softly and badly stupid little tunes.

"Maria, did you open the door for Mr. Dunboyne when he went away just now?"

"No, Miss."

Nothing but ill-luck for me! If I had been left to my own devices, I should now have let the housemaid go. But Selina contrived to give me a hint, on a strange plan of her own. Still at the piano, she began to confuse talking to herself, with playing

to herself. The notes went *tinkle, tinkle*—and the tongue mixed up words with the notes in this way: "Perhaps they have been talking in the kitchen about Philip?"

The suggestion was not lost on me. I said to Maria—who was standing at the other end of the room, near the door—"Did you happen to hear which way Mr. Dunboyne went when he left us."

"I know where he was, Miss, half an hour ago."

"Where was he?"

"At the hotel."

Selina went on with her hints in the same way as before. "How does she know—ah, how does she know?" was the vocal part of the performance this time. My clever inquiries followed the vocal part as before:

"How do you know that Mr. Dunboyne was at the hotel?"

"I was sent there with a letter for him, and waited for the answer."

There was no suggestion required this time. The one possible question was: "Who sent you?"

Maria replied, after first reserving a condition: "You won't tell upon me, Miss?"

I promised not to tell. Selina suddenly left off playing.

"Well," I repeated, "who sent you?"

"Miss Helena."

Selina looked round at me. Her little eyes seemed to have suddenly become big, they stared me so strangely in the face. I don't know whether she was in a state of fright or of wonder. As for myself, I simply lost the use of my tongue. Maria, having no more questions to answer, discreetly left us together.

Why should Helena write to Philip at all—and especially without mentioning it to me? Here was a riddle which was more than I could guess. I asked Selina to help me. She might at least have tried, I thought; but she looked uneasy, and made excuses.

I said: "Suppose I go to Helena, and ask her why she wrote to Philip?" And Selina said: "Suppose you do, dear."

I rang for Maria once more: "Do you know where my sister is?"

"Just gone out, Miss."

There was no help for it but to wait till she came back, and to get through the time in the interval as I best might. But for one circumstance, I might not have known what to do. The truth is, there was a feeling of shame in me when I remem-

bered having listened at the study door. Curious notions come into one's head—one doesn't know how or why. It struck me that I might make a kind of atonement for having been mean enough to listen, if I went to Papa, and offered to keep him company in his solitude. If we fell into pleasant talk, I had a sly idea of my own—I meant to put in a good word for poor Philip.

When I confided my design to Selina, she shut up the piano and ran across the room to me. But somehow she was not like her old self again, yet.

"You good little soul, you are always right. Look at me again, Euneece. Are you beginning to doubt me? Oh, my darling, don't do that! It isn't using me fairly. I can't bear it—I can't bear it!"

I took her hand; I was on the point of speaking to her with the kindness she deserved from me. On a sudden she snatched her hand away, and ran back to the piano. When she was seated on the music stool, her face was hidden from me. At that moment she broke into a strange cry—it began like a laugh, and it ended like a sob.

"Go away to Papa! Don't mind me—I'm a creature of impulse—ha! ha! ha! a little hysterical—the state of the weather—I get rid of these weaknesses, my dear, by singing to myself. I have a

favourite song: 'My heart is light, my will is free.' —Go away! oh, for God's sake, go away!"

I had heard of hysterics, of course; knowing nothing about them, however, by my own experience. What could have happened to agitate her in this extraordinary manner?

Had Helena's letter anything to do with it? Was my sister indignant with Philip for swearing in my presence; and had she written him an angry letter, in her zeal on my behalf? But Selina could not possibly have seen the letter—and Helena (who is often hard on me when I do stupid things) showed little indulgence for me, when I was so unfortunate as to irritate Philip. I gave up the hopeless attempt to get at the truth by guessing, and went away to forget my troubles, if I could, in my father's society.

After knocking twice at the door of the study, and receiving no reply, I ventured to look in.

The sofa in this room stood opposite the door. Papa was resting on it, but not in comfort. There were twitching movements in his feet, and he shifted his arms this way and that as if no restful posture could be found for them. But what frightened me was this. His eyes, staring straight at the door by which I had gone in, had an inquiring expression,

as if he actually did not know me! I stood midway between the door and the sofa, doubtful about going nearer to him.

He said: "Who is it?" This to me—to his own daughter. He said: "What do you want?"

I really could *not* bear it. I went up to him. I said: "Papa, have you forgotten Eunice?"

My name seemed (if one may say such a thing) to bring him to himself again. He sat up on the sofa—and laughed as he answered me.

"My dear child, what delusion has got into that pretty little head of yours? Fancy her thinking that I had forgotten my own daughter! I was lost in thought, Eunice. For the moment, I was what they call an absent man. Did I ever tell you the story of the absent man? He went to call upon some acquaintance of his; and when the servant said, 'What name, sir?' he couldn't answer. He was obliged to confess that he had forgotten his own name. The servant said, 'That's very strange.' The absent man at once recovered himself. 'That's it!' he said: 'my name is Strange.' Droll, isn't it? If I had been calling on a friend to-day, I dare say *I* might have forgotten my name, too. Much to think of, Eunice—too much to think of."

Leaving the sofa with a sigh, as if he was tired

of it, he began walking up and down. He seemed to be still in good spirits. "Well, my dear," he said, "what can I do for you?"

"I came here, Papa, to see if there was anything I could do for You."

He looked at some sheets of paper, strung together, and laid on the table. They were covered with writing (from his dictation) in my sister's hand. "I ought to get on with my work," he said. "Where is Helena?"

I told him that she had gone out, and begged leave to try what I could do to supply her place.

The request seemed to please him; but he wanted time to think. I waited; noticing that his face grew gradually worried and anxious. There came a vacant look into his eyes which it grieved me to see; he appeared to have quite lost himself again. "Read the last page," he said, pointing to the manuscript on the table; "I don't remember where I left off."

I turned to the last page. As well as I could tell, it related to some publication, which he was recommending to religious persons of our way of thinking.

Before I had read half-way through it, he began to dictate, speaking so rapidly that my pen was not

always able to follow him. My handwriting is as bad as bad can be when I am hurried. To make matters worse still, I was confused. What he was now saying seemed to have nothing to do with what I had been reading.

Let me try if I can call to mind the substance of it.

He began in the most strangely sudden way by asking: "Why should there be any fear of discovery, when every possible care had been taken to prevent it? The danger from unexpected events was far more disquieting. A man might find himself bound in honour to disclose what it had been the chief anxiety of his life to conceal. For example, could he let an innocent person be the victim of deliberate suppression of the truth—no matter how justifiable that suppression might appear to be? On the other hand, dreadful consequences might follow an honourable confession. There might be a cruel sacrifice of tender affection; there might be a shocking betrayal of innocent hope and trust."

I remember those last words, just as he dictated them, because he suddenly stopped there; looking, poor dear, distressed and confused. He put his hand to his head, and went back to the sofa.

"I'm tired," he said. "Wait for me while I rest."

In a few minutes he fell asleep. It was a deep repose that came to him now; and, though I don't think it lasted much longer than half an hour, it produced a wonderful change in him for the better when he woke. He spoke quietly and kindly; and, when he returned to me at the table, and looked at the page on which I had been writing, he smiled.

"Oh, my dear, what bad writing! I declare I can't read what I myself told you to write. No! no! don't be down-hearted about it. You are not used to writing from dictation; and I dare say I have been too quick for you." He kissed me and encouraged me. "You know how fond I am of my little girl," he said; "I am afraid I like my Eunice just the least in the world more than I like my Helena. Ah, you are beginning to look a little happier now!"

He had filled me with such confidence and such pleasure that I could not help thinking of my sweetheart. Oh, dear, when shall I learn to be distrustful of my own feelings? The temptation to say a good word for Philip quite mastered any little discretion that I possessed.

I said to Papa: "If you knew how to make me

happier than I have ever been in all my life before, would you do it?"

"Of course I would."

"Then send for Philip, dear, and be a little kinder to him, this time."

His pale face turned red with anger; he pushed me away from him.

"That man again!" he burst out. "Am I never to hear the last of him? Go away, Eunice. You are of no use here." He took up my unfortunate page of writing, and ridiculed it with a bitter laugh. "What is this fit for?" He crumpled it up in his hand, and tossed it into the fire.

I ran out of the room in such a state of mortification that I hardly knew what I was about. If some hard-hearted person had come to me with a cup of poison, and had said: "Eunice, you are not fit to live any longer; take this," I do believe I should have taken it. If I thought of anything, I thought of going back to Selina. My ill luck still pursued me; she had disappeared. I looked about in a helpless way, completely at a loss what to do next—so stupefied, I may even say, that it was some time before I noticed a little three-cornered note on the table by which I was standing. The note was addressed to me:

"EVER-DEAREST EUNEECE,

"I have tried to make myself useful to you, and have failed. But how can I see the sad sight of your wretchedness, and not feel the impulse to try again? I have gone to the hotel to find Philip, and to bring him back to you a penitent and faithful man. Wait for me, and hope for great things. A hundred thousand kisses to my sweet Euneece.

"S. J."

Wait for her, after reading that note! How could she expect it? I had only to follow her, and to find Philip. In another minute, I was on my way to the hotel.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

HELENA'S DIARY.

LOOKING at the last entry in my Journal, I see myself anticipating that the event of to-day will decide Philip's future and mine. This has proved prophetic. All further concealment is now at an end.

Forced to it by fate, or helped to it by chance, Eunice has made the discovery of her lover's in-

fidelity. "In all human probability" (as my father says in his sermons), we two sisters are enemies for life.

I am not suspected, as Eunice is, of making appointments with a sweetheart. So I am free to go out alone, and to go where I please. Philip and I were punctual to our appointment this afternoon.

Our place of meeting was in a secluded corner of the town park. We found a rustic seat in our retirement, set up (one would suppose) as a concession to the taste of visitors who are fond of solitude. The view in front of us was bounded by the park wall and railings; and our seat was prettily approached on one side by a plantation of young trees. No entrance-gate was near; no carriage road crossed the grass. A more safe and more solitary nook for conversation, between two persons desiring to be alone, it would be hard to find in most public parks. Lovers are said to know it well, and to be especially fond of it towards evening. We were there in broad daylight, and we had the seat to ourselves.

My memory of what passed between us is, in

some degree, disturbed by the formidable interruption which brought our talk to an end.

But among other things, I remember that I showed him no mercy at the outset. At one time I was indignant; at another I was scornful. I declared, in regard to my object in meeting him, that I had changed my mind, and had decided to shorten a disagreeable interview by waiving my right to an explanation, and bidding him farewell. Eunice, as I pointed out, had the first claim to him; Eunice was much more likely to suit him, as a companion for life, than I was. "In short," I said, in conclusion, "my inclination for once takes sides with my duty, and leaves my sister in undisturbed possession of young Mr. Dunboyne." With this satirical explanation, I rose to say good-bye.

I had merely intended to irritate him. He showed a superiority to anger for which I was not prepared.

"Be so kind as to sit down again," he said quietly.

He took my letter from his pocket, and pointed to that part of it which alluded to his conduct, when we had met in my father's study.

"You have offered me the opportunity of saying a word in my own defence," he went on. "I prize

that privilege far too highly to consent to your withdrawing it, merely because you have changed your mind. Let me at least tell you what my errand was, when I called on your father. Loving you, and you only, I had forced myself to make a last effort to be true to your sister. Remember that, Helena, and then say—is it wonderful if I was beside myself, when I found You in the study?"

"When you tell me you were beside yourself," I said, "do you mean, ashamed of yourself?"

That touched him. "I mean nothing of the kind," he burst out. "After the hell on earth in which I have been living between you two sisters, a man hasn't virtue enough left in him to be ashamed. He's half mad—that's what he is. Look at my position! I had made up my mind never to see you again; I had made up my mind (if I married Eunice) to rid myself of my own miserable life when I could endure it no longer. In that state of feeling, when my sense of duty depended on my speaking with Mr. Gracedieu alone, whose was the first face I saw when I entered the room? If I had dared to look at you, or to speak to you, what do you think would have become of my resolution to sacrifice myself?"

"What has become of it now?" I asked.

"Tell me first if I am forgiven," he said—"and you shall know."

"Do you deserve to be forgiven?"

It has been discovered by wiser heads than mine that weak people are always in extremes. So far, I had seen Philip in the vain and violent extreme. He now shifted suddenly to the sad and submissive extreme. When I asked him if he deserved to be forgiven, he made the humblest of all replies—he sighed and said nothing.

"If I did my duty to my sister," I reminded him, "I should refuse to forgive you, and send you back to Eunice."

"Your father's language and your father's conduct," he answered, "have released me from that entanglement. I can never go back to Eunice. If you refuse to forgive me, neither you nor she will see anything more of Philip Dunboyne; I promise you that. Are you satisfied now?"

After holding out against him resolutely, I felt myself beginning to yield. When a man has once taken their fancy, what helplessly weak creatures women are! I saw through his vacillating weakness —and yet I trusted him, with both eyes open. My looking-glass is opposite to me while I write. It

shows me a contemptible Helena. I lied, and said I was satisfied—to please *him*.

"Am I forgiven?" he asked.

It is absurd to put it on record. Of course I forgave him. What a good Christian I am, after all!

He took my willing hand. "My lovely darling," he said, "our marriage rests with you. Whether your father approves of it or not, say the word; claim me, and I am yours for life."

I must have been infatuated by his voice and his look; my heart must have been burning under the pressure of his hand on mine. Was it my modesty or my self-control that deserted me? I let him take me in his arms. Again, and again, and again I kissed him. We were deaf to what we ought to have heard; we were blind to what we ought to have seen. Before we were conscious of a movement among the trees, we were discovered. My sister flew at me like a wild animal. Her furious hands fastened themselves on my throat. Philip started to his feet. When he touched her, in the act of forcing her back from me, Eunice's raging strength became utter weakness in an instant. Her arms fell helpless at her sides—her head drooped—she looked at him in a silence which was dreadful, at such a

moment as that. He shrank from the unendurable reproach in those tearless eyes. Meanly, he turned away from her. Meanly, I followed him. Looking back for an instant, I saw her step forward; perhaps to stop him, perhaps to speak to him. The effort was too much for her strength; she staggered back against the trunk of a tree. Like strangers, walking separate one from the other, we left her to her companion—the hideous traitress who was my enemy and her friend.

CHAPTER XXIX.

HELENA'S DIARY.

On reaching the street which led to Philip's hotel, we spoke to each other for the first time.

"What are we to do?" I said.

"Leave this place," he answered.

"Together?" I asked.

"Yes."

To leave us (for awhile), after what had happened, might be the wisest thing which a man, in Philip's critical position, could do. But if I went with him—unprovided as I was with any friend of my own sex, whose character and presence might

sanction the step I had taken—I should be lost beyond redemption. Is any man that ever lived worth that sacrifice? I thought of my father's house closed to me, and of our friends ashamed of me. I have owned, in some earlier part of my journal, that I am not very patient under domestic cares. But the possibility of Eunice being appointed housekeeper, with my power, in my place, was more than I could calmly contemplate. "No," I said to Philip. "Your absence, at such a time as this, may help us both; but, come what may of it, I must remain at home."

He yielded, without an attempt to make me alter my mind. There was a sullen submission in his manner which it was not pleasant to see. Was he despairing already of himself and of me? Had Eunice aroused the watchful demons of shame and remorse?

"Perhaps you are right," he said gloomily. "Good-bye."

My anxiety put the all-important question to him without hesitation:

"Is it good-bye for ever, Philip?"

His reply instantly relieved me: "God forbid!"

But I wanted more: "You still love me?" I persisted.

"More dearly than ever!"

"And yet you leave me?"

He turned pale. "I leave you because I am afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"Afraid to face Eunice again."

The only possible way out of our difficulty that I could see, now occurred to me. "Suppose my sister can be prevailed on to give you up?" I suggested. "Would you come back to us in that case?"

"Certainly!"

"And you would ask my father to consent to our marriage?"

"On the day of my return, if you like."

"Suppose obstacles get in our way," I said—"suppose time passes and tries your patience—will you still consider yourself engaged to me?"

"Engaged to you," he answered, "in spite of obstacles and in spite of time."

"And, while you are away from me," I ventured to add, "we shall write to each other?"

"Go where I may," he said, "you shall always hear from me."

I could ask no more; and he could concede no more. The impression evidently left on him by Eunice's terrible outbreak, was far more serious than I had anticipated. I was myself depressed and ill

at ease. No expressions of tenderness were exchanged between us. There was something horrible in our barren farewell. We merely clasped hands, at parting. He went his way—and I went mine.

There are some occasions when women set an example of courage to men. I was ready to endure whatever might happen to me, when I got home. What a desperate wretch! some people might say, if they could look into this diary.

Maria opened the door; she told me that my sister had already returned, accompanied by Miss Jillgall. There had been apparently some difference of opinion between them, before they entered the house. Eunice had attempted to go on to some other place; and Miss Jillgall had remonstrated. Maria had heard her say: "No, you would degrade yourself"—and, with that, she had led Eunice indoors. I understood, of course, that my sister had been prevented from following Philip to the hotel. There was probably a serious quarrel in store for me. I went straight to the bedroom, expecting to find Eunice there, and prepared to brave the storm that might burst on me. There was a woman at Eunice's end of the room, removing dresses from the wardrobe. I could only see her back, but it was impossible to mistake *that* figure—Miss Jillgall.

She laid the dresses on Eunice's bed, without taking the slightest notice of me. In significant silence I pointed to the door. She went on as coolly with her occupation as if the room had been, not mine but hers; I stepped up to her, and spoke plainly.

"You oblige me to remind you," I said, "that you are not in your own room." There, I waited a little, and found that I had produced no effect. "With every disposition," I resumed, "to make allowance for the disagreeable peculiarities of your character, I cannot consent to overlook an act of intrusion, committed by a Spy. Now, do you understand me?"

She looked round her. "I see no third person here," she said. "May I ask if you mean me?"

"I mean you."

"Will you be so good, Miss Helena, as to explain yourself?"

Moderation of language would have been thrown away on this woman. "You followed me to the park," I said. "It was you who found me with Mr. Dunboyne, and betrayed me to my sister. You are a Spy, and you know it. At this very moment you daren't look me in the face."

Her insolence forced its way out of her at last.

Let me record it—and repay it, when the time comes.

"Quite true," she replied. "If I ventured to look you in the face, I am afraid I might forget myself. I have always been brought up like a lady, and I wish to show it even in the company of such a wretch as you are. There is not one word of truth in what you have said of me. I went to the hotel to find Mr. Dunboyne. Ah, you may sneer! I haven't got your good looks—and a vile use you have made of them. My object was to recall that base young man to his duty to my dear charming injured Euneece. The hotel servant told me that Mr. Dunboyne had gone out. Oh, I had the means of persuasion in my pocket! The man directed me to the park, as he had already directed Mr. Dunboyne. It was only when I had found the place, that I heard some one behind me. Poor innocent Euneece had followed me to the hotel, and had got her directions, as I had got mine. God knows how hard I tried to persuade her to go back, and how horribly frightened I was—No! I won't distress myself by saying a word more. It would be too humiliating to let *you* see an honest woman in tears. Your sister has a spirit of her own, thank God! She won't inhabit the same room with you; she never

desires to see your false face again. I take the poor soul's dresses and things away—and as a religious person I wait, confidently wait, for the judgment that will fall on you!"

She caught up the dresses all together; some of them were in her arms, some of them fell on her shoulders, and one of them towered over her head. Smothered in gowns, she bounced out of the room like a walking milliner's shop. I have to thank the wretched old creature for a moment of genuine amusement, at a time of devouring anxiety. The meanest insect, they say, has its use in this world—and why not Miss Jillgall?

In half an hour more, an unexpected event raised my spirits. I heard from Philip.

On his return to the hotel, he had found a telegram waiting for him. Mr. Dunboyne the elder had arrived in London; and Philip had arranged to join his father by the next train. He sent me the address, and begged that I would write and tell him my news from home by the next day's post.

Welcome, thrice welcome to Mr. Dunboyne the elder! If Philip can manage, under my advice, to place me favourably in the estimation of this rich old man, his presence and authority may do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Here is surely an

influence to which my father must submit, no matter how unreasonable or how angry he may be when he hears what has happened. I begin already to feel hopeful of the future.

CHAPTER XXX.

EUNICE'S DIARY.

THROUGH the day, and through the night I feel a misery that never leaves me—I mean the misery of fear.

I am trying to find out some harmless means of employing myself, which will keep evil remembrances from me. If I don't succeed, my fear tells me what will happen. I shall be in danger of going mad.

I dare not confide in any living creature. I don't know what other persons might think of me, or how soon I might find myself perhaps in an asylum. In this helpless condition, doubt and fright seem to be driving me back to my Journal. I wonder whether I shall find harmless employment here.

I have heard of old people losing their memories. What would I not give to be old! I remem-

ber! oh, how I remember! One day after another I see Philip, I see Helena, as I first saw them when I was among the trees in the park. My sweetheart's arms, that once held me, hold my sister now. She kisses him, kisses him, kisses him.

Is there no way of making myself see something else? I want to get back to remembrances that don't burn in my head, and tear at my heart. How is it to be done?

I have tried books—no! I have tried going out to look at the shops—no! I have tried saying my prayers—no! And now I am making my last effort; trying my pen. My black letters fall from it, and take their places on the white paper. Will my black letters help me? Where can I find something consoling to write down? Where? Where?

Selina—poor Selina, so fond of me, so sorry for me. When I was happy, she was happy too. It was always amusing to hear her talk. Oh, my memory, be good to me! Save me from Philip and Helena. I want to remember the pleasant days when my kind little friend and I used to gossip in the garden.

No: the days in the garden won't come back. What else can I think of?

* * * * *

The recollections that I try to encourage keep away from me. The other recollections that I dread, come crowding back. Still Philip! Still Helena!

But Selina mixes herself up with them. Let me try again if I can think of Selina.

How delightfully good to me and patient with me she was, on our dismal way home from the park! And how affectionately she excused herself for not having warned me of it, when she first suspected that my own sister and my worst enemy were one and the same!

"I know I was wrong, my dear, to let my love and pity close my lips. But remember how happy you were at the time. The thought of making you miserable was more than I could endure—I am so fond of you! Yes; I began to suspect them, on the day when they first met at the station. And, I am afraid, I thought it just likely that you might be as cunning as I was, and have noticed them too."

Oh, how ignorant she must have been of my true thoughts and feelings! How strangely people seem to misunderstand their dearest friends! Knowing, as I did, that I could never love any man but Philip, could I be wicked enough to suppose that Philip would love any woman but me?

I explained to Selina how he had spoken to me, when we were walking together on the bank of the river. Shall I ever forget those exquisite words? 'I wish I was a better man, Eunice; I wish I was good enough to be worthy of you." I asked Selina if she thought he was deceiving me when he said that. She comforted me by owning that he must have been in earnest, at the time—and then she distressed me by giving the reason why.

"My love, you must have innocently said something to him, when you and he were alone, which touched his conscience (when he *had* a conscience), and made him ashamed of himself. Ah, you were too fond of him to see how he changed for the worse, when your vile sister joined you, and took possession of him again! It made my heart ache to see you so unsuspicious of them. You asked me, my poor dear, if they had quarrelled—you believed they were tired of walking by the river, when it was you they were tired of—and you wondered why Helena took him to see the school. My child! she was the leading spirit at the school, and you were nobody. Her vanity saw the chance of making him compare you at a disadvantage with your clever sister. I declare, Euneece, I lose my head if I only think of it! All the strong points in my character seem to

slip away from me. Would you believe it?—I have neglected that sweet infant at the cottage; I have even let Mrs. Molly have her baby back again. If I had the making of the laws, Philip Dunboyne and Helena Gracedieu should be hanged together on the same gallows. I see I shock you. Don't let us talk of it! Oh, don't let us talk of it!"

And here am I writing of it! What I had determined not to do, is what I have done. Am I losing my senses already? The very names that I was most anxious to keep out of my memory, stare me in the face in the lines that I have just written. Philip again! Helena again!

* * * * *

Another day; and something new that must and will be remembered, shrink from it as I may. This afternoon, I met Helena on the stairs.

She stopped, and eyed me with a wicked smile; she held out her hand. "We are likely to meet often, while we are in the same house," she said; "hadn't we better consult appearances, and pretend to be as fond of each other as ever?"

I took no notice of her hand; I took no notice of her shameless proposal. She tried again: "After all, it isn't my fault if Philip likes me better than he likes you. Don't you see that?" I still refused to

speak to her. She still persisted. "How black you look, Eunice! Are you sorry you didn't kill me, when you had your hands on my throat?"

I said: "Yes."

She laughed, and left me. I was obliged to sit down on the stair—I trembled so. My own reply frightened me. I tried to find out why I had said Yes. I don't remember being conscious of meaning anything. It was as if somebody else had said Yes —not I. Perhaps I was provoked, and the word escaped me before I could stop it. Could I have stopped it? I don't know.

* * * * *

Another sleepless night.

Did I pass the miserable hours in writing letters to Philip, and then tearing them up? Or did I only fancy that I wrote to him? I have just looked at the fireplace. The torn paper in it tells me that I did write. Why did I destroy my letters? I might have sent one of them to Philip. After what has happened? Oh, no! no!

Having been many days away from the Girls' Scripture Class, it seemed to be possible that going back to the school and the teaching might help me to escape from myself.

Nothing succeeds with me. I found it impossible

to instruct the girls as usual; their stupidity soon reached the limit of my patience—suffocated me with rage. One of them, a poor, fat, feeble creature, began to cry when I scolded her. I looked with envy at the tears rolling over her big round cheeks. If I could only cry, I might perhaps bear my hard fate with submission.

I walked towards home by a roundabout way; feeling as if want of sleep was killing me by inches.

In the High Street, I saw Helena; she was posting a letter, and was not aware that I was near her. Leaving the post office, she crossed the street, and narrowly escaped being run over. Suppose the accident had really taken place—how should I have felt, if it had ended fatally? What a fool I am to be putting questions to myself about things that have not happened!

The walking tired me; I went straight home.

Before I could ring the bell, the house door opened, and the doctor came out. He stopped to speak to me. While I had been away (he said), something had happened at home (he neither knew nor wished to know what) which had thrown my father into a state of violent agitation. The doctor had administered composing medicine. "My patient is asleep now," he told me; "but remember what I

said to you the last time we met; a longer rest than any doctor's prescription can give him is what he wants. You are not looking well yourself, my dear. What is the matter?"

I told him of my wretched restless nights; and asked if I might take some of the composing medicine which he had given to my father. He forbade me to touch a drop of it. "What is physic for your father, you foolish child, is not physic for a young creature like you," he said. "Count a thousand, if you can't sleep to-night, or turn your pillow. I wish you pleasant dreams." He went away, amused at his own humour.

I found Selina waiting to speak with me, on the subject of poor Papa.

She had been startled on hearing his voice, loud in anger. In the fear that something serious had happened, she left her room to make inquiries, and saw Helena on the landing of the flight of stairs beneath, leaving the study. After waiting till my sister was out of the way, Selina ventured to present herself at the study door, and to ask if she could be of any use. My father, walking excitedly up and down the room, declared that both his daughters had behaved infamously, and that he would not suffer them to speak to him again until they had

come to their senses, on the subject of Mr. Dunboyne. He would enter into no further explanation; and he had ordered, rather than requested, Selina to leave him. Having obeyed, she tried next to find me, and had just looked into the dining-room to see if I was there, when she was frightened by the sound of a fall in the room above—that is to say, in the study. Running upstairs again, she had found him insensible on the floor, and had sent for the doctor.

"And mind this," Selina continued, "the person who has done the mischief, is the person whom I saw leaving the study. What your unnatural sister said to provoke her father——"

"That your unnatural sister will tell you herself," Helena's voice added. She had opened the door, while we were too much absorbed in our talk to hear her.

Selina attempted to leave the room. I caught her by the hand, and held her back. I was afraid of what I might do if she left me by myself. Never have I felt anything like the rage that tortured me, when I saw Helena looking at us with the same wicked smile on her lips that had insulted me when we met on the stairs. "Have *we* anything to be ashamed of?" I said to Selina. "Stay where you are."

"You may be of some use, Miss Jillgall, if you stay," my sister suggested. "Eunice seems to be trembling. Is she angry, or is she ill?"

The sting of this was in the tone of her voice. It was the hardest thing I ever had to do in my life—but I did succeed in controlling myself.

"Go on with what you have to say," I answered, "and don't notice me."

"You are not very polite, my dear, but I can make allowances. Oh, come! come! putting up your hands to stop your ears is too childish. You would do better to express regret for having misled your father. Yes! you did mislead him. Only a few days since, you left him to suppose that you were engaged to Philip. It became my duty, after that, to open his eyes to the truth; and if I unhappily provoked him, it was your fault. I was strictly careful in the language I used. I said: 'Dear father, you have been misinformed on a very serious subject. The only marriage engagement for which your kind sanction is requested, is *my* engagement. *I* have consented to become Mrs. Philip Dunboyne.'"

"Stop!" I said.

"Why am I to stop?"

"Because I have something to say. You and I

are looking at each other. Does my face tell you what is passing in my mind?"

"Your face seems to be paler than usual," she answered—"that's all."

"No," I said; "that is not all. The devil that possessed me, when I discovered you with Philip, is not cast out of me yet. Silence the sneering devil that is in You, or we may both live to regret it."

Whether I did or did not frighten her, I cannot say. This only I know—she turned away silently to the door, and went out.

I dropped on the sofa. That horrid hungering for revenge, which I felt for the first time when I knew how Helena had wronged me, began to degrade and tempt me again. In the effort to get away from this new evil self of mine, I tried to find sympathy in Selina, and called to her to come and sit by me. She seemed to be startled when I looked at her, but she recovered herself, and came to me, and took my hand.

"I wish I could comfort you!" she said, in her kind simple way.

"Keep my hand in your hand," I told her; "I am drowning in dark water—and I have nothing to hold by but you."

"Oh, my darling, don't talk in that way!"

"Good Selina! dear Selina! You shall talk to Me. Say something harmless—tell me a melancholy story—try to make me cry."

My poor little friend looked sadly bewildered.

"I'm more likely to cry myself," she said. "This is so heart-breaking—I almost wish I was back in the time, before you came home, the time when your detestable sister first showed how she hated me. I was happy, meanly happy, in the spiteful enjoyment of provoking her. Oh, Euneece, I shall never recover my spirits again! All the pity in the world would not be pity enough for *you*. So hardly treated! so young! so forlorn! Your good father too ill to help you; your poor mother——"

I interrupted her; she had interested me in something better than my own wretched self. I asked directly if she had known my mother.

"My dear child, I never even saw her!"

"Has my father never spoken to you about her?"

"Only once, when I asked him how long she had been dead. He told me you lost her while you were an infant, and he told me no more. I was looking at her portrait in the study, only yesterday. I think it must be a bad portrait; your mother's face disappoints me."

I had arrived at the same conclusion years since. But I shrank from confessing it.

"At any rate," Selina continued, "you are not like her. Nobody would ever guess that you were the child of that lady, with the long slanting forehead and the restless look in her eyes."

What Selina had said of me and my mother's portrait, other friends had said. There was nothing that I know of to interest me in hearing it repeated —and yet it set me pondering on the want of resemblance between my mother's face and mine, and wondering (not for the first time) what sort of woman my mother was. When my father speaks of her, no words of praise that he can utter seem to be good enough for her. Oh, me, I wish I was a little more like my mother!

It began to get dark; Maria brought in the lamp. The sudden brightness of the flame struck my aching eyes, as if it had been a blow from a knife. I was obliged to hide my face in my handkerchief. Compassionate Selina entreated me to go to bed. "Rest your poor eyes, my child, and your weary head—and try at least to get some sleep." She found me very docile; I kissed her, and said good-night. I had my own idea.

When all was quiet in the house, I stole out

into the passage, and listened at the door of my father's room.

I heard his regular breathing, and opened the door and went in. The composing medicine, of which I was in search, was not on the table by his bedside. I found it in the cupboard—perhaps placed purposely out of his reach. They say that some physic is poison, if you take too much of it. The label on the bottle told me what the dose was. I dropped it into the medicine glass, and swallowed it, and went back to my father.

Very gently, so as not to wake him, I touched poor Papa's forehead with my lips. "I must have some of your medicine," I whispered to him; "I want it, dear, as badly as you do."

Then I returned to my own room—and lay down in bed, waiting to be composed.

CHAPTER XXXI.

EUNICE'S DIARY.

My restless nights are passed in Selina's room.

Her bed remains near the window. My bed has been placed opposite, near the door. Our night-light is hidden in a corner, so that the faint glow

of it is all that we see. What trifles these are to write about! But they mix themselves up with what I am determined to set down in my Journal, and then to close the book for good and all.

I had not disturbed my little friend's enviable repose, either when I left our bedchamber, or when I returned to it. The night was quiet, and the stars were out. Nothing moved but the throbbing at my temples. The lights and shadows in our half-darkened room, which at other times suggest strange resemblances to my fancy, failed to disturb me now. I was in a darkness of my own making, having bound a handkerchief, cooled with water, over my hot eyes. There was nothing to interfere with the soothing influence of the dose that I had taken, if my father's medicine would only help me.

I began badly. The clock in the hall struck the quarter past the hour, the half-past, the three-quarters past, the new hour. Time was awake—and I was awake with Time.

It was such a trial to my patience that I thought of going back to my father's room, and taking a second dose of the medicine, no matter what the risk might be. On attempting to get up, I became aware of a change in me. There was a dull sensation in my limbs which seemed to bind them down

on the bed. It was the strangest feeling. My will said, Get up—and my heavy limbs said, No.

I lay quite still, thinking desperate thoughts, and getting nearer and nearer to the end that I had been dreading for so many days past. Having been as well educated as most girls, my lessons in history had made me acquainted with assassination and murder. Horrors which I had recoiled from reading in past happy days, now returned to my memory; and, this time, they interested instead of revolting me. I counted the three first ways of killing as I happened to remember them, in my books of instruction:—a way by stabbing; a way by poison; a way in a bed, by suffocation with a pillow. On that dreadful night, I never once called to mind what I find myself remembering now—the harmless past time, when our friends used to say: "Eunice is a good girl; we are all fond of Eunice." Shall I ever be the same lovable creature again?

While I lay thinking, a strange thing happened. Philip, who had haunted me for days and nights together, vanished out of my thoughts. My memory of the love which had begun so brightly, and had ended so miserably, became a blank. Nothing was left but my own horrid visions of vengeance and death.

For awhile, the strokes of the clock still reached my ears. But it was an effort to count them; I ended in letting them pass unheeded. Soon afterwards, the round of my thoughts began to circle slowly and more slowly. The strokes of the clock died out. The round of my thoughts stopped.

All this time, my eyes were still covered by the handkerchief which I had laid over them.

The darkness began to weigh on my spirits, and to fill me with distrust. I found myself suspecting that there was some change—perhaps an unearthly change—passing over the room. To remain blindfolded any longer was more than I could endure. I lifted my hand—without being conscious of the heavy sensation which, some time before, had laid my limbs helpless on the bed—I lifted my hand, and drew the handkerchief away from my eyes.

The faint glow of the night-light was extinguished.

But the room was not quite dark. There was a ghastly light trembling over it; like nothing that I have ever seen by day; like nothing that I have ever seen by night. I dimly discerned Selina's bed, and the frame of the window, and the curtains on either side of it—but not the starlight, and not the shadowy tops of the trees in the garden.

The light grew fainter and fainter; the objects in the room faded slowly away. Darkness came.

It may be a saying hard to believe—but, when I declare that I was not frightened, I am telling the truth. Whether the room was lit by awful light, or sunk in awful dark, I was equally interested in the expectation of what might happen next. I listened calmly for what I might hear: I waited calmly for what I might feel.

A touch came first. I felt it creeping on my face—like a little fluttering breeze. The sensation pleased me for awhile. Soon it grew colder, and colder, and colder, till it froze me.

"Oh, no more!" I cried out. "You are killing me with an icy death!"

The dead-cold touches lingered a moment longer —and left me.

The first sound came.

It was the sound of a whisper on my pillow, close to my ear. My strange insensibility to fear remained undisturbed. The whisper was welcome, it kept me company in the dark room.

It said to me: "Do you know who I am?"

I answered: "No."

It said: "Who have you been thinking of this evening?"

I answered: "My mother."

The whisper said: "I am your mother."

"Oh, mother, command the light to come back! Show yourself to me!"

"No."

"Why not?"

"My face was hidden when I passed from life to death. My face no mortal creature may see."

"Oh, mother, touch me! Kiss me!"

"No."

"Why not?"

"My touch is poison. My kiss is death."

The sense of fear began to come to me now. I moved my head away on the pillow. The whisper followed my movement.

"Leave me," I said. "You are an Evil Spirit."

The whisper answered: "I am your mother."

"You come to tempt me."

"I come to harden your heart. Daughter of mine, whose blood is cool; daughter of mine, who tamely submits—you have loved. Is it true?"

"It is true."

"The man you loved has deserted you. Is it true?"

"It is true."

"A woman has lured him away to herself. A

woman has had no mercy on you, or on him. Is it true?"

"It is true."

"If she lives, what crime towards you will she commit next?"

"If she lives, she will marry him."

"Will you let her live?"

"Never."

"Have I hardened your heart against her?"

"Yes."

"Will you kill her?"

"Show me how."

There was a sudden silence. I was still left in the darkness; feeling nothing, hearing nothing. Even the consciousness that I was lying on my bed deserted me. I had no idea that I was in the bedroom; I had no knowledge of where I was.

The ghastly light that I had seen already dawned on me once more. I was no longer in my bed, no longer in my room, no longer in the house. Without wonder, without even a feeling of surprise, I looked round. The place was familiar to me. I was alone in the Museum of our town.

The light flowed along in front of me. I followed, from room to room in the Museum, where the light led.

First, through the picture gallery, hung with the works of modern masters. Then, through the room filled with specimens of stuffed animals. The lion and the tiger, the vulture of the Alps and the great albatross, looked like living creatures threatening me, in the supernatural light. I entered the third room, devoted to the exhibition of ancient armour, and the weapons of all nations. Here the light rose higher, and, leaving me in darkness where I stood, showed a collection of swords, daggers, and knives arranged on the wall in imitation of the form of a star.

The whisper sounded again, close at my ear. It echoed my own thought, when I had called to mind the ways of killing which history had taught me. It said: "Kill her with the knife."

No. My heart failed me when I thought of the blood. I hid the dreadful weapons from my view. I cried out: "Let me go! let me go!"

Again, I was lost in darkness. Again, I had no knowledge in me of where I was. Again, after an interval, the light showed me the new place in which I stood.

I was alone in the burial ground of our parish church. The light led me on, among the graves, to the lonely corner in which the great yew tree stands; and, rising higher, revealed the solemn foliage,

brightened by the fatal red fruit which hides in itself the seeds of death.

The whisper tempted me again. It followed again the train of my own thought. It said: "Kill her by poison."

No. Revenge by poison steals its way to its end. The base deceitfulness of Helena's crime against me seemed to call for a day of reckoning that hid itself under no disguise. I raised my cry to be delivered from the sight of the deadly tree. The changes which I have tried to describe, followed once more the confession of what I felt; the darkness was dispelled for the third time.

I was standing in Helena's room, looking at her as she lay asleep in her bed.

She was quite still now; but she must have been restless at some earlier time. The bed-clothes were disordered, her head had sunk so low, that the pillow rose high and vacant above her. There, coloured by a tender flush of sleep, was the face whose beauty put my poor face to shame. There, was the sister who had committed the worst of murders—the wretch who had killed in me all that made life worth having. While that thought was in my mind, I heard the whisper again. "Kill her openly," the tempting mother said. "Kill her

daringly. Faint heart, do you still want courage? Rouse your spirit; look! see yourself in the act!"

The temptation took a form which now tried me for the first time.

As if a mirror had reflected the scene, I saw myself standing by the bedside, with the pillow that was to smother the sleeper in my hands. I heard the whispering voice telling me how to speak the words that warned and condemned her: "Wake! you who have taken him from me! Wake! and meet your doom."

I saw her start up in the bed. The sudden movement disordered the nightdress over her bosom, and showed the miniature portrait of a man, hung round her neck.

The man was Philip. The likeness was looking at me.

So dear, so lovely—those eyes that had once been the light of my heart, mourned for me and judged me now. They saw the guilty thoughts that polluted me; they brought me to my knees, imploring him to help me back to my better self: "One last mercy, dear, to comfort me under the loss of you. Let the love that was once my life, be my good angel still. Save me, Philip, even though you forsake me—save me from myself!"

* * * * * *

There was a sudden cry.

The agony of it pierced my brain—drove away the ghastly light—silenced the tempting whispers. I came to myself. I saw—and not in a dream.

Helena *had* started up in her bed. That cry of terror, at the sight of me in her room at night, *had* burst from her lips. The miniature of Philip hung round her neck, a visible reality. Though my head was dizzy, though my heart was sinking, I had not lost my senses yet. All that the night lamp could show me, I still saw; and I heard the sound, faintly, when the door of the bed-chamber was opened. Alarmed by that piercing cry, my father came hurrying into the room.

Not a word passed between us three. The whispers that I had heard were wicked; the thoughts that had been in my mind were vile. Had they left some poison in the air of the room, which killed the words on our lips?

My father looked at Helena. With a trembling hand, she pointed to me. He put his arm round me, and held me up. I remember his leading me away—and I remember nothing more.

My last words are written. I lock up this journal of misery—never, I hope and pray, to open it again.

SECOND PERIOD (*continued*).

EVENTS IN THE FAMILY, RELATED BY THE GOVERNOR.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE MIDDLE-AGED LADY.

In the year 1870, I found myself compelled to submit to the demands of two hard task-masters. Advancing age and failing health reminded the Governor of the Prison of his duty to his successor, in one unanswerable word—Resign.

When they have employed us and interested us, for the greater part of our lives, we bid farewell to our duties—even to the gloomy duties of a prison —with a sense of regret. My view of the future presented a vacant prospect indeed, when I looked at my idle life to come, and wondered what I should do with it. Loose on the world—at my age!—I drifted into domestic refuge, under the care of my two dear and good sons. After a while (never mind how long a while) I began to grow restless under the heavy burden of idleness. Having nothing else to complain of, I complained of my health, and consulted a doctor. That sagacious

man hit on the right way of getting rid of me—he recommended travelling.

This was unexpected advice. After some hesitation, I accepted it reluctantly.

The instincts of age recoil from making new acquaintances, contemplating new places, and adopting new habits. Besides, I hate railway travelling. However, I contrived to get as far as Italy, and stopped to rest at Florence. Here, I found pictures by the old masters that I could really enjoy, a public park that I could honestly admire, and an excellent friend and colleague of former days; once chaplain to the prison, now clergyman in charge of the English Church. We met in the gallery of the Pitti Palace; and he recognised me immediately. I was pleased to find that the lapse of years had made so little difference in my personal appearance.

The traveller who advances as far as Florence, and does not go on to Rome, must be regardless indeed of the opinions of his friends. Let me not attempt to conceal it—I am that insensible traveller. Over and over again, I said to myself: "Rome must be done;" and over and over again, I put off doing it. To own the truth, the fascinations of Florence, aided by the society of my friend, laid so strong a hold on me that I believe I should have ended my

days in the delightful Italian city, but for the dangerous illness of one of my sons. This misfortune hurried me back to England, in dread, every step of the way, of finding that I had arrived too late. The journey (thank God) proved to have been taken without need. My son was no longer in danger, when I reached London in the year 1875.

At that date, I was near enough to the customary limit of human life to feel the necessity of rest and quiet. In other words, my days of travel had come to their end.

Having established myself in my own country, I did not forget to let old friends know where they might find me. Among those to whom I wrote was another colleague of past years, who still held his medical appointment in the prison. When I received the doctor's reply, it enclosed a letter directed to me at my old quarters in the Governor's rooms. Who could possibly have sent a letter to an address which I had left five years since? My correspondent proved to be no less a person than the Congregational Minister—the friend whom I had estranged from me by the tone in which I had written to him, on the long-past occasion of his wife's death.

It was a distressing letter to read. I beg permission to give only the substance of it in this place.

Entreating me, with touching expressions of humility and sorrow, to forgive his long silence, the writer appealed to my friendly remembrance of him. He was in sore need of counsel, under serious difficulties; and I was the only person to whom he could apply for help. In the disordered state of his health at that time, he ventured to hope that I would visit him at his present place of abode, and would let him have the happiness of seeing me as speedily as possible. He concluded with this extraordinary postscript:

"When you see my daughters, say nothing to either of them which relates, in any way, to the subject of their ages. You shall hear why when we meet."

The reading of this letter naturally reminded me of the claims which my friend's noble conduct had established on my admiration and respect, at the past time when we met in the prison. I could not hesitate to grant his request—strangely as it was expressed, and doubtful as the prospect appeared to be of my answering the expectations which he had founded on the renewal of our intercourse. Answering his letter by telegraph, I promised to be with him on the next day.

On arriving at the station, I found that I was

the only traveller, by a first-class carriage, who left the train. A young lady, remarkable by her good looks and good dressing, seemed to have noticed this trifling circumstance. She approached me with a ready smile. "I believe I am speaking to my father's friend," she said; "my name is Helena Gracedieu."

Here was one of the Minister's two "daughters"; and that one of the two—as I discovered the moment I shook hands with her—who was my friend's own child. Miss Helena recalled to me her mother's face, infinitely improved by youth and health, and by a natural beauty which that cruel and deceitful woman could never have possessed. The slanting forehead and the shifting flashing eyes, that I recollected in the parent, were reproduced (slightly reproduced, I ought to say) in the child. As for the other features, I had never seen a more beautiful nose and mouth, or a more delicately-shaped outline, than was presented by the lower part of the face. But Miss Helena somehow failed to charm me. I doubt if I should have fallen in love with her, even in the days when I was a foolish young man.

The first question that I put, as we drove from the station to the house, related naturally to her father.

"He is very ill," she began; "I am afraid you must prepare yourself to see a sad change. Nerves. The mischief first showed itself, the doctor tells us, in derangement of his nervous system. He has been, I regret to tell you, obstinate in refusing to give up his preaching and pastoral work. He ought to have tried rest at the seaside. Things have gone on from bad to worse. Last Sunday, at the beginning of his sermon, he broke down. Very, very sad—is it not? The doctor says that precious time has been lost, and he must make up his mind to resign his charge. He won't hear of it. You are his old friend. Please try to persuade him."

Fluently spoken; the words well chosen; the melodious voice reminding me of the late Mrs. Gracedieu's advantages in that respect; little sighs judiciously thrown in here and there, just at the right places; everything, let me own, that could present a dutiful daughter as a pattern of propriety—and nothing, let me add, that could produce an impression on my insensible temperament. If I had not been too discreet to rush at a hasty conclusion, I might have been inclined to say: her mother's child, every inch of her!

The interest which I was still able to feel in my friend's domestic affairs centred, it is hardly

necessary to say, in the daughter whom he had adopted.

In her infancy I had seen the child, and liked her; I was the one person living (since the death of Mrs. Gracedieu) who knew how the Minister had concealed the sad secret of her parentage; and I wanted to discover if the hereditary taint had begun to show itself in the innocent offspring of the murderess. Just as I was considering how I might harmlessly speak of Miss Helena's "sister," Miss Helena herself introduced the subject.

"May I ask," she resumed, "if you were disappointed when you found nobody but me to meet you at our station?"

Here was an opportunity of paying her a compliment, if I had been a younger man, or if she had produced a favourable impression on me. As it was, I hit—if I may praise myself—on an ingenious compromise.

"What excuse could I have," I asked, "for feeling disappointed?"

"Well, I hear you are an official personage—I ought to say, perhaps, a retired official personage. We might have received you more respectfully, if *both* my father's daughters had been present at the

station. It's not my fault that my sister was not with me."

The tone in which she said this strengthened my prejudice against her. It told me that the two girls were living together on no very friendly terms; and it suggested—justly or unjustly I could not then decide—that Miss Helena was to blame.

"Perhaps your sister is ill?" I said.

"My sister is away from home."

"Surely, Miss Helena, that is a good reason for her not coming to meet me?"

"I beg your pardon—it is a bad reason. She has been sent away for the recovery of her health—and the loss of her health is entirely her own fault."

What did this matter to me? I decided on dropping the subject. My memory reverted, however, to past occasions on which the loss of *my* health had been entirely my own fault. There was something in these personal recollections, which encouraged my perverse tendency to sympathize with a young lady to whom I had not yet been introduced. The young lady's sister appeared to be discouraged by my silence. She said: "I hope you don't think the worse of me for what I have just mentioned?"

"Certainly not."

"Perhaps, you fail to see any need for my speaking of my sister at all? Will you kindly listen, if I try to explain myself?"

"With pleasure."

She slyly set the best construction on my perfectly commonplace reply.

"Thank you," she said. "The fact is, my father (I can't imagine why) wishes you to see my sister as well as me. He has written to the farmhouse at which she is now staying, to tell her to come home to-morrow. It is possible—if your kindness offers me an opportunity—that I may ask to be guided by your experience, in a little matter which interests me. My sister is rash, and reckless, and has a terrible temper. I should be very sorry indeed if you were induced to form an unfavourable opinion of me, from anything you might notice if you see us together. You understand me, I hope?"

"I quite understand you."

To set me against her sister, in her own private interests—there, as I felt sure, was the motive under which she was acting. As hard as her mother, as selfish as her mother, and, judging from those two bad qualities, probably as cruel as her mother. That was how I understood Miss Helena Gracedieu, when our carriage drew up at her father's house.

A middle-aged lady was on the door-step, when we arrived, just ringing the bell. She looked round at us both; being evidently as complete a stranger to my fair companion as she was to me. When the servant opened the door, she said:

"Is Miss Jillgall at home?"

At the sound of that odd name, Miss Helena tossed her head disdainfully. She took no sort of notice of the stranger-lady who was at the door of her father's house. This young person's contempt for Miss Jillgall appeared to extend to Miss Jillgall's friends.

In the meantime, the servant's answer was: "Not at home."

The middle-aged lady said: "Do you expect her back soon?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"I will call again, later in the day."

"What name, if you please?"

The lady stole another look at me, before she replied.

"Never mind the name," she said—and walked away.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"Do you know that lady?" Miss Helena asked, as we entered the house.

"She is a perfect stranger to me," I answered.

"Are you sure you have not forgotten her?"

"Why do you think I have forgotten her?"

"Because she evidently remembered you."

The lady had no doubt looked at me twice. If this meant that my face was familiar to her, I could only repeat what I have already said. Never, to my knowledge, had I seen her before.

Leading the way upstairs, Miss Helena apologised for taking me into her father's bedroom. "He is able to sit up in an arm-chair," she said; "and he might do more, as I think, if he would exert himself. He won't exert himself. Very sad. Would you like to look at your room, before you see my father? It is quite ready for you. We hope"—she favoured me with a fascinating smile, devoted to winning my heart when her interests required it—

"we hope you will pay us a long visit; we look on you as one of ourselves."

I thanked her, and said I would shake hands with my old friend before I went to my room. We parted at the bedroom door.

It is out of my power to describe the shock that overpowered me when I first saw the Minister again, after the long interval of time that had separated us. Nothing that his daughter said, nothing that I myself anticipated, had prepared me for that lamentable change. For the moment, I was not sufficiently master of myself to be able to speak to him. He added to my embarrassment by the humility of his manner, and the formal elaboration of his apologies.

"I feel painfully that I have taken a liberty with you," he said, "after the long estrangement between us—for which my want of Christian forbearance is to blame. Forgive it, sir, and forget it. I hope to show that necessity justifies my presumption, in subjecting you to a wearisome journey for my sake."

Beginning to recover myself, I begged that he would make no more excuses. My interruption seemed to confuse him.

"I wished to say," he went on, "that you are the one man who can understand me. There is my only reason for asking to see you, and looking forward as

I do to your advice. You remember the night—or was it the day?—before that miserable woman was hanged? You were the only person present when I agreed to adopt the poor little creature, stained already (one may say) by its mother's infamy. I think your wisdom foresaw what a terrible responsibility I was undertaking; you tried to prevent it. Well! well! you have been in my confidence—you only. Mind! nobody in this house knows that one of the two girls is not really my daughter. Pray stop me, if you find me wandering from the point. My wish is to show that you are the only man I can open my heart to. She——" He paused, as if in search of a lost idea, and left the sentence uncompleted. "Yes," he went on, "I was thinking of my adopted child. Did I ever tell you that I baptized her myself? and by a good Scripture name too—Eunice. Ah, sir, that little helpless baby is a grown-up girl now; of an age to inspire love, and to feel love. I blush to acknowledge it; I have behaved with a want of self-control, with a cowardly weakness—. No! I am, indeed, wandering this time. I ought to have told you first that I have been brought face to face with the possibility of Eunice's marriage. And, to make it worse still, I can't help liking the young man. He comes of a good family—excellent

manners, highly educated, plenty of money, a gentleman in every sense of the word. And poor little Eunice is so fond of him! Isn't it dreadful to be obliged to check her dearly-loved Philip? The young gentleman's name is Philip. Do you like the name? I say I am obliged to check her sweetheart in the rudest manner, when all he wants to do is to ask me modestly for my sweet Eunice's hand. Oh, what have I not suffered, without a word of sympathy to comfort me, before I had courage enough to write to you! Shall I make a dreadful confession? If my religious convictions had not stood in my way, I believe I should have committed suicide. Put yourself in my place. Try to see yourself shrinking from a necessary explanation, when the happiness of a harmless girl—so dutiful, so affectionate—depended on a word of kindness from your lips. And that word you are afraid to speak! Don't take offence, sir; I mean myself, not you. Why don't you say something?" he burst out fiercely, incapable of perceiving that he had allowed me no opportunity of speaking to him. "Good God! don't you understand me, after all?"

The signs of mental confusion in his talk had so distressed me, that I had not been composed enough to feel sure of what he really meant, until

he described himself as "shrinking from a necessary explanation." Hearing those words, my knowledge of the circumstances helped me; I realised what his situation really was.

"Compose yourself," I said, "I understand you at last."

He had suddenly become distrustful.

"Prove it!" he muttered, with a furtive look at me. "I want to be satisfied that you understand my position."

"This is your position," I told him. "You are placed between two deplorable alternatives. If you tell this young gentleman that Miss Eunice's mother was a criminal hanged for murder, his family—even if he himself doesn't recoil from it—will unquestionably forbid the marriage; and your adopted daughter's happiness will be the sacrifice."

"True!" he said. "Frightfully true! Go on."

"If on the other hand, you sanction the marriage, and conceal the truth, you commit a deliberate act of deceit; and you leave the lives of the young couple at the mercy of a possible discovery, which might part husband and wife—cast a slur on their children—and break up the household."

He shuddered while he listened to me. "Come to the end of it," he cried.

I had no more to say, and I was obliged to answer him to that effect.

"No more to say?" he replied. "You have not told me yet what I most want to know."

I did a rash thing; I asked what it was that he most wanted to know.

"Can't you see it for yourself?" he demanded indignantly. "Suppose you were put between those two alternatives which you mentioned just now."

"Well?"

"What would you do, sir, in my place? Would you own the disgraceful truth—before the marriage —or run the risk, and keep the horrid story to yourself?"

Either way, my reply might lead to serious consequences. I hesitated.

He threatened me with his poor feeble hand. It was only the anger of a moment; his humour changed to supplication. He reminded me piteously of bygone days: "You used to be a kind-hearted man. Has age hardened you? Have you no pity left for your old friend? My poor heart is sadly in want of a word of wisdom, spoken kindly."

Who could have resisted this? I took his hand:

"Be at ease, dear Minister. In your place I should run the risk, and keep that horrid story to myself."

He sank back gently in his chair. "Oh, the relief of it!" he said. "How can I thank you as I ought for quieting my mind?"

I seized the opportunity of quieting his mind to good purpose by suggesting a change of subject. "Let us have done with serious talk for the present," I proposed. "I have been an idle man for the last five years, and I want to tell you about my travels."

His attention began to wander, he evidently felt no interest in my travels. "Are you sure," he asked anxiously, "that we have said all we ought to say? No!" he cried, answering his own question. "I believe I have forgotten something—I am certain I have forgotten something. Perhaps I mentioned it in the letter I wrote to you. Have you got my letter?"

"I showed it to him. He read the letter, and gave it back to me with a heavy sigh. "Not there!" he said despairingly. "Not there!"

"Is the lost remembrance connected with anybody in the house?" I asked, trying to help him. "Does it relate, by any chance, to one of the young ladies?"

"You wonderful man! Nothing escapes you. Yes, the thing I have forgotten concerns one of the girls. Stop! Let me get at it by myself. Surely it relates to Helena?" He hesitated; his face clouded over with an expression of anxious thought. "Yes; it relates to Helena," he repeated — "but how?" His eyes filled with tears. "I am ashamed of my weakness," he said faintly. "You don't know how dreadful it is to forget things in this way."

The injury that his mind had sustained now assumed an aspect that was serious indeed. The subtle machinery which stimulates the memory, by means of the association of ideas, appeared to have lost its working power in the intellect of this unhappy man. I made the first suggestion that occurred to me, rather than add to his distress by remaining silent.

"If we talk of your daughter," I said, "the merest accident — a word spoken at random by you or me — may be all your memory wants to rouse it."

He agreed eagerly to this: "Yes! Yes! Let me begin. Helena met you, I think, at the station. Of course, I remember that; it only happened a few hours since. Well?" he went on, with a change in

his manner to parental pride, which it was pleasant to see, "did you think my daughter a fine girl? I hope Helena didn't disappoint you?"

"Quite the contrary." Having made that necessary reply, I saw my way to keeping his mind occupied by a harmless subject. "It must, however, be owned," I went on, "that your daughter surprised me."

"In what way?"

"When she mentioned her name. Who could have supposed that you—an inveterate enemy to the Roman Catholic Church—would have christened your daughter by the name of a Roman Catholic Saint?"

He listened to this with a smile. Had I happily blundered on some association which his mind was still able to pursue?

"You happen to be wrong this time," he said pleasantly. "I never gave my girl the name of Helena; and, what is more, I never baptized her. You ought to know that. Years and years ago, I wrote to tell you that my poor wife had made me a proud and happy father. And surely I said that the child was born while she was on a visit to her brother's rectory. Do you remember the name of the place? I told you it was a remote little village,

called—— Suppose we put *your* memory to a test? Can you remember the name?" he asked, with a momentary appearance of triumph showing itself, poor fellow, in his face.

After the time that had elapsed, the name had slipped my memory. When I confessed this, he exulted over me, with an unalloyed pleasure which it was cheering so see.

"*Your* memory is failing you now," he said. "The name is Long Lanes. And what do you think my wife did—this is so characteristic of her!—when I presented myself at her bedside. Instead of speaking of our own baby, she reminded me of the name that I had given to our adopted daughter when I baptized the child. 'You chose the ugliest name that a girl can have,' she said. I begged her to remember that 'Eunice' was a name in Scripture. She persisted in spite of me. (What firmness of character!) 'I detest the name of Eunice!' she said; 'and now that I have a girl of my own, it's my turn to choose the name; I claim it as my right.' She was beginning to get excited; I allowed her to have her own way, of course. 'Only let me know,' I said, 'what the name is to be when you have thought of it.' My dear sir, she had the name ready, without thinking about it: 'My baby shall be called by

the name that is sweetest in my ears, the name of my dear lost mother.' We had—what shall I call it?—a slight difference of opinion when I heard that the name was to be Helena. I really could *not* reconcile it to my conscience to baptize a child of mine by the name of a Popish saint. My wife's brother set things right between us. A worthy good man; he died not very long ago—I forget the date. Not to detain you any longer, the rector of Long Lanes baptized our daughter. That is how she comes by her un-English name; and so it happens that her birth is registered in a village which her father has never inhabited. I hope, sir, you think a little better of my memory now?"

I was afraid to tell him what I really did think.

He was not fifty years old yet; and he had just exhibited one of the sad symptoms which mark the broken memory of old age. Lead him back to the events of many years ago, and (as he had just proved to me) he could remember well and relate coherently. But let him attempt to recall circumstances which had only taken place a short time since, and forgetfulness and confusion presented the lamentable result, just as I have related it.

The effort that he had made, the agitation that he had undergone in talking to me, had confirmed

my fears that he would overtask his wasted strength. He lay back in his chair. "Let us go on with our conversation," he murmured. "We haven't recovered what I had forgotten, yet." His eyes closed, and opened again languidly. "There was something I wanted to recall," he resumed, "and you were helping me." His weak voice died away; his weary eyes closed again. After waiting until there could be no doubt that he was resting peacefully in sleep, I left the room.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE LIVELY OLD MAID.

A PERFECT stranger to the interior of the house (seeing that my experience began and ended with the minister's bedchamber), I descended the stairs, in the character of a guest in search of domestic information.

On my way down, I heard the door of a room on the ground floor opened, and a woman's voice below, speaking in a hurry: "My dear, I have not a moment to spare; my patients are waiting for me." This was followed by a confidential communication,

judging by the tone. "Mind! not a word about me to that old gentleman!" Her patients were waiting for her—had I discovered a female doctor? And there was some old gentleman whom she was not willing to trust—surely I was not that much-injured man?

Reaching the hall just as the lady said her last words, I caught a glimpse of her face, and discovered the middle-aged stranger who had called on "Miss Jillgall," and had promised to repeat her visit. A second lady was at the door, with her back to me, taking leave of her friend. Having said good-bye, she turned round—and we confronted each other.

I found her to be a little person, wiry and active; past the prime of life, and ugly enough to encourage prejudice, in persons who take a superficial view of their fellow-creatures. Looking impartially at the little sunken eyes which rested on me with a comical expression of embarrassment, I saw signs that said: There is some good here, under a disagreeable surface, if you can only find it.

She saluted me with a carefully-performed curtsey, and threw open the door of a room on the ground floor.

"Pray walk in, sir, and permit me to introduce

myself. I am Mr. Gracedieu's cousin—Miss Jillgall. Proud indeed to make the acquaintance of a gentleman distinguished in the service of his country--or perhaps I ought to say, in the service of the Law. The Governor offers hospitality to prisoners. And who introduces prisoners to board and lodging with the Governor?—the Law. Beautiful weather for the time of the year, is it not? May I ask—have you seen your room?"

The embarrassment which I had already noticed had extended by this time to her voice and her manner. She was evidently trying to talk herself into a state of confidence. It seemed but too probable that I was indeed the person mentioned by her prudent friend at the door.

Having acknowledged that I had not seen my room yet, my politeness attempted to add that there was no hurry. The wiry little lady was of the contrary opinion; she jumped out of her chair as if she had been shot out of it. "Pray let me make myself useful. The dream of my life is to make myself useful to others; and to such a man as you——I consider myself honoured. Besides, I do enjoy running up and downstairs. This way, dear sir; this way to your room."

She skipped up the stairs, and stopped on the

first landing. "Do you know, I am a timid person, though I may not look like it. Sometimes, curiosity gets the better of me—and then I grow bold. Did you notice a lady who was taking leave of me just now at the house door?"

I replied that I had seen the lady for a moment, but not for the first time. "Just as I arrived here from the station," I said, "I found her paying a visit when you were not at home."

"Yes—and do tell me one thing more." My readiness in answering seemed to have inspired Miss Jillgall with confidence. I heard no more confessions of overpowering curiosity. "Am I right," she proceeded, "in supposing that Miss Helena accompanied you, on your way here from the station?"

"Quite right."

"Did she say anything particular, when she saw the lady asking for me at the door?"

"Miss Helena thought," I said, "that the lady recognised me as a person whom she had seen before."

"And what did you think yourself?"

"I thought Miss Helena was wrong."

"Very extraordinary!" With that remark Miss Jillgall dropped the subject. The meaning of her

reiterated inquiries was now, as it seemed to me, clear enough. She was eager to discover how I could have inspired the distrust of me, expressed in the caution addressed to her by her friend.

When we reached the upper floor, she paused before the Minister's room.

"I believe many years have passed," she said, "since you last saw Mr. Gracedieu. I am afraid you have found him a sadly changed man? You won't be angry with me, I hope, for asking more questions? I owe Mr. Gracedieu a debt of gratitude which no devotion, on my part, can ever repay. You don't know what a favour I shall consider it, if you will tell me what you think of him. Did it seem to you that he was not quite himself? I don't mean in his looks, poor dear—I mean in his mind."

There was true sorrow and sympathy in her face. I believe I should hardly have thought her ugly, if we had first met at that moment. Thus far, she had only amused me. I began really to like Miss Jillgall now.

"I must not conceal from you," I replied, "that the state of Mr. Gracedieu's mind surprised and distressed me. But I ought also to tell you that I saw him perhaps at his worst. The subject on which he wished to speak with me would have agitated

any man, in his state of health. He consulted me about his daughter's marriage."

Miss Jillgall suddenly turned pale.

"His daughter's marriage?" she repeated. "Oh, you frighten me!"

"Why should I frighten you?"

She seemed to find some difficulty in expressing herself. "I hardly know how to put it, sir. You will excuse me (won't you?) if I say what I feel. You have influence—not the sort of influence that finds places for people who don't deserve them, and gets mentioned in the newspapers—I only mean influence over Mr. Gracedieu. That's what frightens me. How do I know——? Oh, dear, I'm asking another question! Allow me, for once, to be plain and positive. I'm afraid, sir, you have encouraged the Minister to consent to Helena's marriage."

"Pardon me," I answered, "you mean Eunice's marriage."

"No, sir! Helena."

"No, Madam! Eunice."

"What does he mean?" said Miss Jillgall to herself.

I heard her. "This is what I mean," I asserted, in my most positive manner. "The only subject on which the Minister has consulted me is Miss Eunice's marriage."

My tone left her no alternative but to believe me. She looked not only bewildered but alarmed. "Oh, poor man, has he lost himself in such a dreadful way as that?" she said to herself. "I daren't believe it." She turned to me. "You have been talking with him for some time. Please try to remember. While Mr. Gracedieu was speaking of Euneece, did he say nothing of Helena's infamous conduct to her sister?"

Not the slightest hint of any such thing, I assured her, had reached my ears.

"Then," she cried, "I can tell you what he has forgotten! We kept as much of that miserable story to ourselves as we could, in mercy to him. Besides, he was always fondest of Euneece; she would live in his memory when he had forgotten the other—the wretch, the traitress, the plotter, the fiend!" Miss Jillgall's good manners slipped, as it were, from under her; she clenched her fists as a final means of expressing her sentiments. "The wretched English language isn't half strong enough for me," she declared with a look of fury.

I took a liberty. "May I ask what Miss Helena has done?" I said.

"*May* you ask? Oh, Heavens! you must ask, you shall ask. Mr. Governor, if your eyes are not

opened to Helena's true character, I can tell you what she will do; she will deceive you into taking her part. Do you think she went to the station out of regard for the great man? Pooh! she went with an eye to her own interests; and she means to make the great man useful. Thank God, I can stop that!"

She checked herself there, and looked suspiciously at the door of Mr. Gracedieu's room.

"In the interest of our conversation," she whispered, "we have not given a thought to the place we have been talking in. Do you think the Minister has heard us?"

"Not if he is asleep—as I left him."

Miss Jillgall shook her head ominously. "The safe way is this way," she said. "Come with me."

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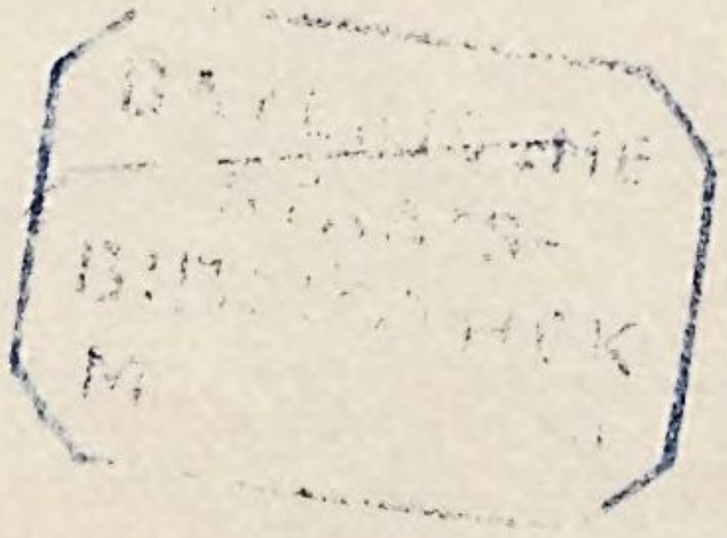

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